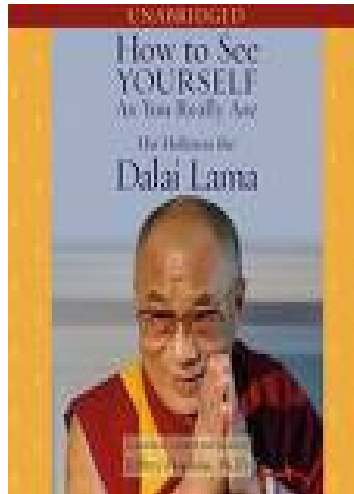


How To See Yourself As You Really Are



Translator: Jeffrey Hopkins, Ph.D.
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■ The Big Idea

According to His Holiness the Dalai Lama, we each possess the ability to achieve happiness and a meaningful life, but the key to realizing that goal is self-knowledge. In *How To See Yourself As You Really Are*, the world's foremost Buddhist leader and recipient of the Nobel Peace prize shows readers how to recognize and dispel misguided notions of self and embrace the world from a more realistic – and loving – perspective.

Through illuminating explanations and step-by-step exercises, His Holiness helps readers to see the world as it actually exists, and explains how, through the interconnection of meditative concentration and love, true altruistic enlightenment is attained.

Enlivened by personal anecdotes and intimate accounts of the Dalai Lama's own life experiences, *How To See Yourself As You Really Are* is an inspirational and empowering guide that can be read and enjoyed by anyone seeking spiritual fulfillment and happiness.

Why You Need This Book

This book itself is an illustration of Tibet's contribution to world culture, reminding us of the importance of the preservation of a homeland for its unique cultural legacies which is humanity's collective treasure. The light shining through the Dalai Lama's teachings has its source in that culture, offering insights and practices that so many of us need in our own worlds.

LAYING THE GROUND FOR INSIGHT TO GROW

To succeed at developing insight, first you need to identify ignorance. Ignorance in this context is not just a lack of knowledge – it is an active misapprehension of the nature of things. It mistakenly assumes that people and things exist in and of themselves, by way of their own nature.

This is not an easy concept to grasp, but it is very important to identify this faulty perception, for it is the source of all kinds of destructive emotions such as lust and hatred. In Buddhism we repeatedly speak of emptiness, but if you do not see how people mistakenly attribute to things their own inherent existence, it is impossible to understand emptiness. You have to recognize, at least in a rough way, what you are falsely superimposing on a phenomenon before you can understand the emptiness that exists in its stead.

Understanding how you actually exist, who you really are without the overlay of false imagination, is the main objective.

THREE WAYS OF SEEING OBJECTS

There are three modes of mental operation on an object:

1. Conceiving the object to inherently exist, which is what ignorance does
2. Conceiving the object to not inherently exist, which is what insight does
3. Conceiving the object without qualifying it with their inherent existence or the absence of inherent existence, as when just ordinarily seeing something, such as a house for what it is outside of implied meanings.

When ignorance is overcome, you will have uprooted the mistaken beliefs that superimpose on objects' qualities such as beauty and ugliness beyond what they actually have. Then all other afflictive emotions – lust, hatred, jealousy, belligerence, and so on – that have ignorance as their root are overcome.

POSTURE

Meditative posture is important, because if you straighten your body, the energy channels within the body will also straighten, allowing the energy flowing in those channels to balance, which in turn will assist in balancing your mind and putting it at your command. Although meditation could even be conducted lying down, a cross-legged sitting posture with the following seven features is helpful:

1. Sit with your legs crossed, with a separate cushion under your rear.
2. Calm abiding is cultivated by focusing the mind not on an external object but on an internal object. Thus, with your eyes neither widely open nor tightly close but open a little, gaze down toward the tip of your nose but not intensely; if this is not comfortable, gaze toward the floor in front of you. Leave your eyes slightly open. Visual stimuli will not bother your mental consciousness. Later, it is fine if your eyes close of their own accord.
3. Straighten your backbone, like an arrow or a pile of coins, without arching back or bending forward.
4. Keep your shoulders level and your hands four finger-widths below the navel, with the left hand underneath, palm up, and the right hand on top of it, also palm up, your thumbs touching to form a triangle.
5. Keep your head level and straight, so that your nose is in a straight line you're your navel, but arch your neck slightly, like a peacock.
6. Leave the tip of your tongue touching the roof of your mouth near the front teeth, which later will enable you to stay for long periods in meditation without drooling. It will also keep you from breathing too strongly, which would dry out your mouth and throat.
7. Breathe in and out quietly, gently, and evenly.

LEVELS OF PROGRESS TOWARD CALM ABIDING

Buddhist teachings describe nine levels of progress toward actual calm abiding; they are a meditation map, telling you where you are and what you need to do to advance.

Level 1: Putting the mind on the object.

When after hearing or reading instructions on how to set the mind on an object of meditation, you initially draw the mind inside and try to put it there, it may be that you will not be able to keep your mind on the object and will be subject to a waterfall of thoughts, one after another. If so, you are on the first level.

Level 2: Periodic Placement.

As you energetically employ mindfulness and ask yourself again and again, “Am I staying on the object?” you become able to put your mind on the object for brief periods, though there is still more distraction than there is attention to the object. This is the second level, during which rambling thoughts sometimes take a rest and sometimes suddenly arise.

Level 3: Withdrawal And Resetting.

As you gradually come to recognize distraction sooner and sooner through more mindfulness, you become able to place your attention back on the object when it has wandered, as if putting a patch on a cloth. Mindfulness has now matured to the point where you immediately recognize distraction.

Level 4: Staying Close.

When, due to the full maturation of mindfulness, you are able immediately to counter laziness and forgetfulness, you pass to the fourth level, in which you do not lose the object in forgetfulness.

Level 5: Disciplining the Mind.

Introspection now becomes stronger, and through your own experience you recognize the advantages of meditative stability; coarse laxity no longer arises. The withdrawal of the mind from extraneous objects now proceeds too far, so it becomes necessary to apply remedies to subtle laxity and thereby heighten the mind.

Level 6: Pacifying the Mind.

By applying remedies to subtle laxity, you attain the sixth level. Introspection has fully developed, and through your own experience you know the faults of scattering to thoughts and destructive emotions; subtle laxity poses no great danger.

Level 7: Thoroughly Pacifying the Mind.

By applying remedies to subtle excitement, you reach the seventh level. As soon as desire, scattering, laxity, lethargy, and the like are produced in an even more subtle form, you abandon them through exertion. Now you no longer need to be concerned about coming under the influence of subtle laxity and excitement.

Level 8: Making the Mind One-Pointed.

Now the power of effort has fully matured so that, with a little exertion at the beginning of the session, the entire session of meditation remains devoid of laxity and excitement, and you are able to maintain meditative stability without interruption.

Level 9: The Mind Placed in Equipose.

Now that you have gained the power of familiarity from this training, the exertion of implementing mindfulness and introspection is no longer needed, and the mind places itself on the object of its accord; the ninth level is spontaneous and effortless.

FOUR STEPS TO REALIZATION

There are four major steps toward realizing that you do not exist the way you think you do.

The first step is to identify the ignorant beliefs that must be refuted. You need to do this because when you perform analysis seeking yourself within mind and body or separate from mind and body, and you do not find it, you could wrongly conclude that you utterly do not exist.

The second step is to determine that, if the “I” exists the way it seems to be, it must be either one with mind and body or separate from mind and body.

The third step is to contemplate the problems with “I” and accept that the mind-body complex is the same.

The fourth step is to thoroughly contemplate the problems with “I” and the mind-body complex being inherently different.

DEEPENING LOVE WITH INSIGHT

Apply these six similarities to yourself to understand the nature of your suffering and develop a strong intention to transcend this dynamic.

1. Just as a bucket in a well is bound by a rope, so beings are constrained by counterproductive emotions and actions driven by their own fears.
2. Just as the movement of a bucket up and down the well is run by an operator, so the process of my cyclic existence is run by an untamed mind, specifically through mistakenly believing that a self exists inherently, and then mistaking the nature of “mine.”
3. Just as a bucket travels up and down the well over and over, so is it to ceaselessly wander in the great well of cyclic existence, from the uppermost states of temporary happiness to the lowest states of temporary pain.
4. Just as it takes great exertion to draw the bucket up but descends easily, so beings have to expend great effort to draw themselves upward to a happier life.
5. Just as a bucket does not determine its own movements, so the factors involved in shaping a person’s life are the results of past ignorance,

attachment, and grasping. In the present, these same factors are continually creating more problems for our future lives, like waves in the ocean.

6. Just as the bucket bumps against the walls of the well when it ascend and descends, so sentient beings are battered day by day by the suffering of pain and change, and by being caught in processes beyond their control.

THE IMPACT OF GREAT LOVE AND COMPASSION

Be willing to familiarize yourself with this attitude, taking on yourself the burden of protecting all sentient beings from all problems; do it repeatedly and with regular analysis. Your empathy will be so great that it will suffuse your entire being.

Without any desire for reward, your aim will be solely the development of others, and never be disheartened or discouraged in your task.

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