

Some observations about contemplation technique.

from answers to retreatant questions by Tyler Dewar on the *Progressive Stages of Meditation on Emptiness*

If you're looking for a self and not finding anything, rest in that state of not finding.

If you have a general sense of a presence that has the texture of self, how might you work with that?

We're encouraged to have this inner dialog without ourselves, to have a debate of some sort.

To set up a sense of tension, you might want to take a devils advocate role with yourself. "Maybe the self is there." That encourages you to bring out the reasoning you've received at the stage of hearing.

Where is this self? Look for it.

What if the self were in the heart center, for example, or the chest, or the eyes or visual capacity? What if it was?

Be careful about that as well:

We're trying to give ourselves a chance to cultivate familiarity with tenable thoughts that run against the grain of our patterns of confusion. So the devils advocate position might lead us to become more aligned with our confused patterns, rather than giving ourselves a chance to see what it feels like to say "there is no self" and really mean it.

Consider the skandhas:

Do they help you focus or turn attention to the locus of experience: form (body), visceral feeling, emotion, concepts, etc. Then go directly there. You are free to go directly to the sweet spot of where your clinging is." Analyze that. It is independent of you, singular, permanent?

Finally, you don't need to negate the appearance.

You don't need to stop the feeling, the vibration or buzzing you're experiencing that you're investigating as the self. In fact, the more relaxed and gentle your treatment of it is, the more clarity you'll have a chance to have in your analytical relationship with it, your thoughts about it.

If you feel, "I better get rid of this feeling. Uh oh, it feels like a self," just relax.

Place your mind on that feeling and say okay, is this permanent, independent or other things, or singular (one thing)? It's feeling kind of stable right now, but is this really what I think of as me?

When insulted, is this the feeling I'm referring to when I think of "'I' am insulted?" When I say my name, is it this I automatically go to? And what you'll often find is that your reference point for yourself is shifting all the time, that it's not always that thing.

When we're analyzing the body, the physical, Kenpo Rinpoche says when we have a headache, the self is the head. I am in pain. When we have a stomach ache, our sense of self is in the stomach. When someone criticizes our work then our sense of self is in that job we do.

### Contemplations on self

from talks by Tyler Dewar on the *Progressive Stages of Meditation on Emptiness*

When there is an idea of the self,

there is the idea of the other.

From self and other come grasping and aversion.

Through thorough habituation with these

all problems arise

- Dharmakirti

Bring to mind an instance of suffering, or emotional or mental affliction:

Is this instance of suffering or emotional or mental affliction connected to my idea of self, my perception of a self?

Is it connected to any clinging on my part?

Because fixation on a self is the root of samsara

As well as the root of karma and mental afflictions

Since fixation on the self is the root of all suffering

Its opposite, selflessness must be ascertained.

- Khenpo Rinpoche

If due to intense analysis,

the ability to rest deteriorates,

do more resting meditation

and replenish the stillness.

If due to prolonged resting,

you no longer want to analyze,

do analytical meditation

and strengthen the mind's clarity

- Ponlop Rinpoche