

# Freeing oneself from the illusion of self

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Amongst the many teachings left by the Buddha, a great many are concerned with the illusion of self, the manner in which it comes into being and the means to eradicate it. Amongst these, the non-appropriation of the five aggregates occupies a pivotal place. Let's look a little closer at what the Buddha said about this.

To practice the non-appropriation of the five aggregates is essential since it is mainly through their appropriation that the illusion of self is constructed. Beginning with the body. The Buddha says: «All material forms and the body must be seen thus : this is not me, this is not mine, this is not my self.» So it's a question of changing the way we look at the body, which is not an easy thing, given the deeply-rooted habits that we have of considering the body as me or mine. The Buddha recommends specific meditations consisting of examining different parts of the body –classified according to their belonging to one or other of the elements– without spirit of appropriation. For example: «Everything that relates to earth in the body, namely hair, nails, teeth, skin, flesh, tendons, bones, marrow, kidneys, heart, liver, pleura, spleen, lungs, stomach, intestines, excreta must be considered in the following manner: this is not mine, I am not this, this is not my self.» To the disciples especially attached to the body –their own and that of others– the Buddha sometimes recommended more radical complementary methods, such as going

to meditate next to decomposing corpses. In doing so, the Buddha is not looking to provoke a rejection or a disgust of the body but only a non-identification with it. In short, it would be a mistake to assimilate the Buddha's point of view with that which rejects and despises the body, considering it the ideal support for evil or sin. The body has its place on the Buddha's path: the lotus posture, concentration on breathing, careful attention to body postures and attitudes, mudras, etc. For the Buddha, it's only a matter of changing the way we look at the body in order to deal with the illusion

