

## Good Heart - Awakened Heart

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### Good Heart

-THE DALAI LAMA

A good heart is the source of all happiness, says His Holiness the Dalai Lama, and we can all be good-hearted with some effort. But better still, he says, is to have bodhichitta—a good heart imbued with wisdom.

Anyone who has good thoughts, who does a lot to help others, and who leaves behind good memories is respected by people all over the world, regardless of whether they are religious or not. On the other hand, the ignorance, arrogance, and obstinacy of certain individuals, whether their intentions were good or evil, have been at the root of all the tragedies of history. The mere names of these ruthless tyrants inspire fear and loathing. So the extent to which people will like us naturally depends on how much or how little we think of others' good.

My practice is the peaceful path of kindness, love, compassion, and not harming others. This has become part of me.

Speaking of my own experience, I sometimes wonder why a lot of people like me. When I think about it, I cannot find in myself any specially good quality, except for one small thing. That is the positive mind, which I try to explain to others and which I do my best to develop myself. Of course, there are moments when I do get angry, but in the depth of my heart, I do not hold a grudge against anyone. I cannot pretend that I am really able to practice bodhichitta [awakened heart], but it does give me tremendous inspiration. Deep inside me, I realize how valuable and beneficial it is, that is all. And I try as much as possible to consider others to be more important than myself. I think that's why people take note of me and like me, because of my good heart.

When people say that I have worked a lot for peace, I feel embarrassed. I feel like laughing. I

don't think I have done very much for world peace. It's just that my practice is the peaceful path of kindness, love, compassion, and not harming others. This has become part of me. It is not something for which I have specially volunteered. I am simply a follower of the Buddha, and the Buddha taught that patience is the supreme means for transcending suffering. He said, "If a monk harms others, he is not a monk." I am a Buddhist monk, so I try to practice accordingly. When people think this practice is something unique and special and call me a leader of world peace, I feel almost ashamed!

A good heart is the source of all happiness and joy, and we can all be good-hearted if we make an effort. But better still is to have bodhichitta, which is a good heart imbued with wisdom. It is the strong desire to attain awakening for the benefit of all beings. This thought of helping others is rooted in compassion, which grows from a feeling of gratitude and love for beings, who are afflicted by suffering. Our greatest enemy is to consider ourselves more important than others, which leads us and others to certain ruin. From this sense of separation from other arises all the harm, fear, and suffering in this world.

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### Tibetan Buddhist Practices to Awakens Your Heart

- PEMA CHÖDRÖN

Pema Chödrön's commentary on Atisha's famed mind-training *Logong slogans* that utilize our difficulties and problems to awaken the heart.

(Atisha was a teacher in the 11 century in Tibetan Mahayana and Vajrayana Buddhism)

When I first read the lojong ("mind training") teachings I was struck by their unusual message

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that we can use our difficulties and problems to awaken our hearts. Rather than seeing the unwanted aspects of life as obstacles, difficulties are presented as the raw material necessary for awakening genuine uncontrived compassion. It is apparent that in this present age it is necessary to emphasize that the first step is to develop compassion and wise understanding of our own wounds.

It is unconditional compassion for ourselves that leads naturally to unconditional compassion for others. If we are willing to stand fully in our own shoes and never give up on ourselves, then we will be able to put ourselves in the shoes of others and never give up on them. True compassion does not come from wanting to help out those less fortunate than ourselves but from realizing our kinship with all beings.

The lojong teachings are organized around seven points that contain fifty-nine pithy slogans that remind us how to awaken our hearts. Presented here are a few of those slogans:

### **First, train in the preliminaries.**

The preliminaries are also known as the four reminders. In your daily life, try to:

1. Maintain an awareness of the preciousness of human life.
2. Be aware of the reality that your life ends; death comes for everyone.
3. Recall that whatever you do, whether virtuous or not, has a result; what goes around comes around.
4. Contemplate that as long as you are too focused on self-importance you will suffer. Obsessing about getting what you want and avoiding what you don't want does not result in happiness.

### **Regard all phenomena as impermanent and in this way illusory.**

Whatever you experience in your life—pain, pleasure, heat, cold or anything else—all arises and passes away continuously. You can experience this open, unfixated quality in sitting meditation; all that arises in your mind—hate or love and all the rest—arises and passes away within the mind. Although the experience can get

extremely vivid, it is truly a product of your mind.

### **Be grateful to everyone.**

Others will always show you exactly where you are stuck. They say or do something and you automatically get hooked into a familiar way of reacting—shutting down, speeding up or getting all worked up.

When you react in the habitual way, with anger, greed and so forth, it gives you a chance to see your patterns and work with them honestly and compassionately. Without others provoking you, you remain ignorant of your painful habits and cannot train in transforming your blindspots into the path of awakening.

### **Of the two witnesses, listen to the principal one (you).**

The two witnesses of what you do are others and yourself. Of these two, you are the only one who really knows exactly what is going on. So work with seeing yourself with compassion but without any self-deception.

### **Always maintain a joyful mind.**

Constantly apply cheerfulness, if for no other reason than because you are on this spiritual path. Have a sense of gratitude to everything, even difficult emotions, because of their potential to wake you up.

### **Abandon maligning others.**

You speak badly of others, thinking it will make you feel superior. This only sows seeds of meanness in your heart, causing others not to trust you and causing you to suffer.

### **Abandon bringing things to a painful point.**

Don't humiliate people.

### **All activities should be done with one intention.**

Whatever you are doing, take the attitude of wanting it directly or indirectly to benefit others. Take the attitude of wanting it to increase your experience of kinship with your fellow beings.

*Kindness and a good heart are the foundation for success in this life. - Dalai Lama*

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