

Point Two: The Main Practice, Which is Training in Awakened Heart

Awakened Heart, Awakened Mind

Awakened Mind and *Generosity*

Generosity, as used here, refers to not holding anything back. We're open to, and friends with, ourselves and others. It comes from resting in the fullness of our big minds, and discovering the inexhaustible source of kindness they've always held. When we have inexhaustible wealth, we're happy to share it. The Sanskrit word for big mind is "alaya," meaning "abode." No one's alaya is better than anyone else's. Our wealth is unlimited, and there's no sense of an owner, so generosity is easy and a pleasure to accomplish.

Our compassion can be compared to a pimple or open wound that's very sore, so we take pains to avoid rubbing it, for example in the shower. Like the sore spot, our compassion comes from the basic sense that we're vulnerable, like an open wound, or soft spot. We don't like it, and we'd like to get rid of it, but it's always there.

But, because of that wound, even a Hitler can fall in love, or appreciate beauty, art, poetry, or music. Our basic sanity shines through it, however small the opening.

We have an inner wound too. It's our inherent true natures, present, if unseen, at all times, and bruised by wisdom and compassion. When outer and inner wounds meet, we realize that they're one big wound, our compassion. It feels harsh to abandon our guard over this slit in our skin, but harsh practice reflects gentle intention. It feels like you've taken a dive into a blender to go for a swim. It's more refreshing than you'd think.

The way to the inner wisdom is through the outer wound, our compassion. This basic openness prepares the way for compassion, which we practice in specific situations (the slogans illustrate these). Together, they bring *shamatha* (tranquility and focus) in marriage with *vipashyana* (insight or wisdom).

We've found our basic goodness, and feel friendly toward all things. We feel relaxed and carefree.

Awakened Heart and *Discipline*

A warm, accepting attitude toward self and others, gives way to compassion. *Discipline* as used here means going beyond giving into good conduct, marked by an absence of territory and passion. It means you can find a tender heart in any situation. We relax, trust ourselves, and find that basic goodness is always there. We learn to love, without treating love as a business deal that requires reciprocation. It's one of the hardest things we'll ever learn, but as our acquaintance with alaya deepens, it's much easier to do. Affection and love have a lot of room in alaya; they're in a context of immensity, openness, daring.

A mother-child analogy fits here. An ancient method for developing awakened heart (compassion) is to remember the kindness of our mothers. Their sacrifices and devotion to us can be a pilot light for bringing out a kindness and compassion that makes others more important than ourselves. Discipline comes in as we extend that gentleness toward our father, loved ones, friends, others in general, and even our enemies. We produce softness and reason, and come to view others as more important than ourselves. This is a tremendous relief! We can devote ourselves to the service of others. Such are the later slogans in this section (7-10).

Awakened Mind Slogans

2. Regard all appearances as dreams.

This slogan expresses compassion and openness. Sitting meditation allows us to watch thoughts arise, abide and cease, much like the process of a dream, and so it is in the rest of our lives. It's not that there's some superseding reality, like "nothingness," when we regard appearances as dreams. The appearances are all there is. They're vivid, but soft too.

3. Examine the nature of unborn awareness.

Look at your basic mind. *Just* look. It has no particular characteristics, no color, no shape, no sections... There's nothing there, nothing to hold on to, yet there is awareness. You could apply this to the previous slogan and examine *who* is regarding appearances as dreams. There's no one there! Amazing!

4. Self-liberate even the antidote.

The antidote is the realization that discursive thoughts have no origin. Don't hang on to it! You could fall into the mistake of thinking that nothing really matters, that you can do anything you want. Use the antidote to get over self-deception and let go.

5. Rest in the nature of alaya, the essence.

There are eight types of consciousness in Buddhist psychology. The first seven are: consciousness of the five senses (5), consciousness of mental activity (6), and "nuisance mind," or klesha consciousness, which invests a lot of energy in the above. Alaya is the eighth consciousness, or ground mind, and when we rest there in meditation we're freed of the first seven consciousnesses. Rest in its simplicity and clarity. Everything else is a production originating in alaya. Recognize productions and rest in the ground mind. Trust yourself. You're basically good. Film analogy: The screen is the world of appearance, which we project ourselves onto. The film is mind's "fickleness." Sense organs are like the projector, grinding on and making the film project. The *bulb* is like alaya, and meditation removes the bulb and places it into a regular lamp base, so we can contemplate it, and one day discover its nature. The bulb has no concern for how the screen is doing, or how the image is coming through. It's just raw luminosity, like our ground minds. Rest simply in that, not making a big deal out of it.

6. In postmeditation, be a child of illusion.

This refers to a sense that, after meditation, everything is based on creating one's basic perceptions out of one's preconceptions. It takes a lot of mindfulness and awareness to accomplish this. It's as if you took the bulb (alaya) and put it in a flashlight and carry it wherever you go. Things aren't solid, and everything

becomes pliable and workable. Like swimming, you have to paddle (flash mindfulness and awareness in situations). We don't feel claustrophobic in this practice.

Awakened Heart Slogans

7. Sending and taking should be practiced alternately. These two should ride the breath.

This is the main practice in the development of awakened heart. The Tibetan word, *tonglen*, literally means "sending and receiving." In the basic practice you give away happiness, pleasure, or anything that feels good. All this exits with your breath. As you breathe in, you take on resentments, problems, and anything that feels bad. The practice challenges our sense of territoriality. Do it without waiting for an effect. Just do it, no matter what. This is the opposite of what we do in everyday life. We're practicing putting others first in our attitude. In ancient writings, it says that you can even practice by exchanging a piece of fruit from one hand to the other.

Actual practice: Begin with parents and loved ones, or anyone who's sacrificed his or her life for your benefit. Oftentimes, we never even said thanks for all they did. The point isn't to get guilty about it, but to realize how "mean" we've been. Sometimes someone comes out of the blue and tries to help you completely. Work these into your practice too. Thank them by breathing in other people's problems, misery, and torment, then breathe out all your goodness, the best that you have. We become shock absorbers for other people's pain. So, starting with our mother, we contemplate the many things she (or another person who loved you selflessly) did for us, asking for nothing in return. If we can't find such a person, we can focus on breathing in our own hatred and resentment of the world.

Warmth is essential to this practice. The word *maitri* encapsulates it. As a matter of fact, it's often called *Maitri practice*. *Maitri* meditation implies the practice of warmth, friendliness, and sympathy. We breathe out anything that feels good, and breathe in everything terrible. Take it seriously, and take delight in doing so! It's like everything is loose and detachable. Breathing out is like cutting the cord of a kite, yet the kite returns when we breathe in, and a sense of circulation develops.

Breathe out your genuineness. Breathe in others' hypocrisy. Unlike straight *Shamatha* practice, we work with the content of our thoughts in *tonglen*.

8. Three objects, three poisons, and three seeds of virtue.

This relates to the postmeditation experience, which comes after the main practice (*tonglen*).

The three *objects* are *friends, enemies and neutrals*.

The three *poisons* are *passion, aggression and ignorance*.

The three *seeds of virtue* are the *absence* of passion, aggression and ignorance.

We take on the passion, aggression and ignorance of others so that they are free of these poisons. We take on the passion of our friends, the aggression of our enemies, and the apathy of everyone else.

When these poisons happen in you: “May I learn to hold this aggression to myself, and thereby may all sentient beings be free of aggression.” Do the parallel practice for the other two.

9. In all activities, train with slogans.

Whenever you feel “me-ness,” think:

1. May I receive all evils; may my virtues go to others.
2. Profit and victory to others; loss and defeat to myself.

If you have a sense of yuckiness, make it your property. When you have a sense of vision or upliftedness, you give it to others.

10. Begin the sequence of sending and taking with yourself.

“First thought, best thought.” When something happens, first thing take on the pain. After that, give away anything pleasurable.

It involves letting go of the demand for pleasure. Discipline is intrinsic to this slogan. Open your territory completely and let go of everything.

It’s a joyful slogan in spirit. Isn’t it wonderful that human beings can do this? It’s very brave.

Source:

Trungpa, C., 1993. Training the mind and cultivating loving-kindness. Boston, Shambhala.