

The Practice of Lojong, by Traleg Kyabgon Rinpoche

Foreword by Ken Wilber

It is my honor to introduce *The Practice of Lojong*, by one of today's most respected and renowned Tibetan Buddhist masters, Traleg Kyabgon Rinpoche. It is Rinpoche's belief, which I heartily second, that not only are the secrets of Lojong an antidote to much of today's emotional pain and suffering, they contain the very practices that can fully awaken the mind and liberate awareness. And not just in a passing, self-help kind of fashion, a "Gosh-I-feel-better" kind of way, but by striking right at the heart of suffering itself, while simultaneously pointing to the enlightened or fully liberated mind.

Grand promise or honest assertion?

Lojong in Tibetan means "mind training." It is revered throughout Tibet as containing the very essence of the great Mahayana Buddhist teachings, helpfully organized into 7 easily understood groups. Further, these teachings are distilled and presented in their absolutely essential core: practice these, and you practice all. These teachings, in and of themselves, are said to be able to lead one to enlightenment, or what

the Tibetans also call the Great Liberation, a liberation from suffering and an awakening to ultimate reality itself. Lojong contains practices that are said to do exactly that because they are grounded in and evoke “bodhicitta”: the mind and heart of enlightenment.

What is this enlightened mind and awakened heart? There are many ways to describe it, but the best way is to experience it directly, for oneself, and that is what this book is all about: the practice and direct experience of awakened mind and heart.

Although this awakened mind-and-heart is literally indescribable—and what direct experience isn’t?—a few things may be said about it. In his introduction, Rinpoche himself emphasizes that, among other things, awakened awareness is “the view from the mountaintop. Without that perspective, we will always be looking up from the valley rather than understanding the vista from the mountaintop.” He goes on to point out that the “lo” of Lo-jong “emphasizes the mind’s cognitive nature, its ability to discriminate, distinguish and so forth. *Lo-jong* is about training the mind in a very fundamental way. That is why Chogyam Trungpa Rinpoche translated this word as *basic intelligence*.”

What is this basic intelligence? And what kind of “cognitive nature” is being emphasized here? Given the anti-intellectual and anti-cognitive bias in our culture at large, it might be surprising to hear the word “cognitive” used in any but a derogatory fashion. But notice that the GNI of cognitive is similar to the KNO of knowledge which is the same as the GNO of gnosis, and in Sanskrit, that is JNA, which is found in prajna and jnana. And it is jnana—or gnosis—that is said to be the enlightened knowledge, the enlightened mind and heart, that is awakened by Lojong practice. Gnosis is none other

than the view from the mountaintop, the nondual view that is capable of delivering us from suffering and awakening the enlightened mind.

Lojong, in other words, is an unsurpassed manual for the awakening of gnosis.

It gets more interesting. Gnosis in action, according to Buddhism, is *compassion*. And it is the twofold practice of nondual awareness and compassion that characterizes and evokes bodhicitta, or the enlightened mind and heart. The point is that Lojong contains extraordinarily profound and effective practices for awakening both gnosis and compassion. And the result of that, by any other name, is enlightenment—an enlightenment that flies on the wings of nondual awareness and compassion in action.

Welcome, then, to one of the most highly revered manuals of the Great Liberation. Your guide to this precious treasure trove is Traleg Rinpoche, who, I believe, is one of the most deeply insightful and profound teachers not only of the Tibetan tradition, but of any tradition, East or West. He combines an undeniable grasp of Mahayana and Vajrayana Buddhism with a thorough familiarity with us barbarians in the West and our many strange ways.

I say that facetiously, of course; but still, the difficulties of translating a teaching from one culture to another are notorious, and yet time and again I have been struck by Rinpoche's easy fluency with Western culture and especially its overall intellectual canon, something that, frankly, is missing in most foreign teachers. In fact, I know of no other teacher who better grasps both the Tibetan and Western traditions than Traleg Rinpoche, and thus the combination of the depth of his own enlightenment and the capacity to transmit it are matched by few Tibetan teachers. This makes Rinpoche an ideal Vajrayana teacher for Westerners, and I heartily recommend that, if this book

speaks to you, please check out his other works (although there are many, two of my favorites are *Mind at Ease* and *Luminous Bliss*).

A manual for the awakening of gnosis, a manual of the Great Liberation. I hope this sounds intriguing to you, because it just as well might have been titled “a manual for the delivery of your own soul—by delivering you from your own soul.” It is only with gnosis or jnana that we are delivered—delivered by the view from the mountaintop, a view so high that it is far beyond even your own soul, your own ego, your own separate self. For it is the separate-self sense, the self-contraction, the egoic coil in consciousness, that fractures and tears this present moment into a subject versus an object, a self-in-here versus a world-out-there, and this self-in-here then suffers the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune, a world of victimhood and sorrow and terror and torture and self-delusion...--when the cure for all of those is the simple awareness of presence, in this here and now, that exchanges self for other, and sees beyond both, this view from the mountaintop and its compassion in action, which together make room for an enlightened world—an awakened mind and heart—whose radiance outshine the self-contraction and the tortures of the ego, releasing awareness—releasing you—into your own true nature, which is none other than bodhicitta itself.

This is a manual for just that training, a manual for awakening your own true heart and mind. May it mean as much to you as to the countless number of other souls it has previously awakened.