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Ten years ago, when I was in India on a Buddhist study-abroad program, I had the opportunity to meet the Ogyen Trinley Dorje, one of the two claimants to the title of 17th Karmapa, a reincarnating authority figure in Tibetan Buddhism and head of one of the largest denominations. At the time, he was only about 20 years old—the same age I was. The study-abroad group and I gathered in the Karmapa's ornate meeting chamber. To my surprise, rather than acting compassionate and expansive, the Karmapa seemed grumpy, restless, and uncomfortable.

A question-and-answer session ensued. Someone from our group asked, "How can I be a good Buddhist?" The Karmapa scowled. "Don't try to be a good Buddhist. Go home to your country and be a good citizen, a good family member, a good neighbor. Work on doing good in your community. Don't worry about Buddhism." At the time, I thought he was just being cynical. I thought this was a cop-out answer from a young monk who resented the position he was born into. I now understand what he meant.

What will you do with the hours in your day? How will you treat your heart and the people around you? How will you care for your house and the houses around you? These are questions that our lives continually pose for us, no matter where we are, no matter how fucked-up or enlightened we are. In the East or the West, they are wonderful questions to engage. The best place to find the answers is right where you are, right now.