



His Holiness the XIV Dalai Lama

on

Environment

Collected Statements

Environment and Development Desk
Department of Information and International Relations
Central Tibetan Administration

2007

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First Edition March 1994
Second Edition 1995
Third Edition December 2004
Fourth and Updated Edition January 2007

No. of Copies: 2000

ISBN: 81-86627-39-1

Published by:

Environment and Development Desk
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Printed at Narthang Press, Dharamsala

A list of specialist publications and audio-video material on Tibet are available from the above address. These include books, pamphlets, ad news periodicals in Tibetan, English, Hindi and Chinese.

Foreword

Since 1959, His Holiness the Dalai Lama has worked tirelessly to resolve the Tibet issue with Beijing through non-violence and has been recognised the world over as one of the most revered and respected spiritual teachers, an indefatigable champion of Tibetan freedom, and a committed spokesperson for the environmental movement. His Holiness was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1989 in recognition of his non-violent struggle to resolve the Tibet issue with China, his teachings on peace, compassion and environmental conservation.

According to Buddhist teachings, there is a close interdependence between the natural environment and sentient beings. In keeping with Buddhist teachings and the Tibetan way of life, His Holiness the Dalai Lama in his Five-Point Peace Plan for Tibet proposed the creation of Tibet into a zone of non-violence and a sanctuary of environmental protection.

This book is a collection of statements and speeches His Holiness the Dalai Lama made on the environment on different occasions from 1986 through 2006. We hope that this collection of essays would be of benefit and a source of inspiration to all those who are interested in environmental issues and global ecological solutions. We hope this will provide a basis for a better understanding of our own individual's and humanity's collective responsibility, and be an inspiration for people to think globally and act locally.

This fourth edition of the statements by His Holiness the Dalai Lama on environmental conservation includes the comments made by him during the Amravati Kalachakra initiation in January 2006, urging the Tibetans in Tibet not to use skins and other parts of wildlife, particularly those of endangered species for clothing or decorative purposes. This advice of His Holiness

the Dalai Lama was immediately put into practice by Tibetans in Tibet who launched a widespread campaign to burn clothes made of wildlife skin.

This edition also includes comments by His Holiness the Dalai Lama advising Tibetans to try to opt for a vegetarian diet.

This compilation of excerpts from speeches and teachings by His Holiness the Dalai Lama on the importance of environmental protection is dedicated to all those who continuously work for the ecological conservation of Mother Earth.

Tempa Tsering
Kalon for the Department of Information
and International Relations
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1. An Ethical Approach to Environmental Protection

Peace and the survival of life on earth as we know it are threatened by human activities which lack a commitment to humanitarian values. Destruction of nature and nature resources results from ignorance, greed and lack of respect for the earth's living things.

This lack of respect extends even to earth's human descendants, the future generations who will inherit a vastly degraded planet if world peace does not become a reality, and destruction of the natural environment continues at the present rate.

Our ancestors viewed the earth as rich and bountiful, which it is. Many people in the past also saw nature as inexhaustibly sustainable, which we now know is the case only if we care for it.

It is not difficult to forgive destruction in the past, which resulted from ignorance. Today, however, we have access to more information, and it is essential that we re-examine ethically what we have inherited, what we are responsible for, and what we will pass on to coming generations. Clearly this is a pivotal generation. Global communication is possible, yet confrontations take place more often than meaningful dialogues for peace.

Our marvels of science and technology are matched if not out-weighed by many current tragedies, including human starvation in some parts of the world, and extinction of other life forms.

Exploration of outer space takes place at the same time as the earth's own oceans, seas, and freshwater areas grow increasingly polluted, and their life forms are largely unknown or misunderstood.

Many of the earth's habitats, animals, plants, insects, and even micro-organisms that we know of as rare or endangered, may

not be known at all by future generations. We have the capacity, and the responsibility. We must act before it is too late.

*This message, dated June 5, 1986, marks World Environment Day, and that year's theme, Peace and the Environment. Reprinted from **Tree of Life: Buddhism and Protection of Nature**, Buddhist Perception of Nature, 1987.*



2. Five-Point Peace Plan for Tibet

The world is increasingly interdependent, so that lasting peace national, regional, and global-can only be achieved if we think in terms of the broader interest rather than parochial needs. At this time, it is crucial that all of us, the strong and the weak, contribute in our own way. I speak to you today as the leader of the Tibetan people and as a Buddhist monk devoted to the principles of a religion based on love and compassion. Above all, I am here as a human being that is destined to share this planet with you and all others as brothers and sisters. As the world grows smaller, we need each other more than in the past. This is true in all parts of the world, including the continent I come from.

At present in Asia, as elsewhere, tensions are high. There are open conflicts in the Middle East, Southeast Asia, and in my own country, Tibet. To a large extent, These problems are symptoms of the underlying tensions that exist among the area's great powers. In order to resolve regional conflicts, an approach is required that takes into account the interests of all-relevant countries and peoples, large and small. Unless comprehensive solutions are formulated, that takes into account the aspirations the people most directly concerned, piecemeal or merely expedient measures will only create new problems.

The Tibetan people are eager to contribute to regional and world peace, and I believe they are in a unique position to do so. Traditionally, Tibetans are a peace-loving and non-violent people. Since Buddhism was introduced to Tibet over one thousand years ago, Tibetans have practiced non-violence with respect to all forms of life. This attitude has also been extended to our country's international relations. Tibet's highly strategic position in the heart of Asia, separating the continent's great powers-India, China and the USSR- has throughout history endowed it with an essential role in the maintenance of peace and stability. This is precisely why, in the past, Asia's empires went to great lengths to keep one

another out of Tibet. Tibet's value as an independent buffer state was integral to the region's stability.

When the newly formed People's Republic of China invaded Tibet in 1949/50, it created a new source of conflict. This was highlighted when, following the Tibetan national uprising against the Chinese and my flight to India in 1962. Today large numbers of troops are massed on both sides of the Himalayan border, and tension is once more dangerously high.

The real issue, of course, is not the Indo-Tibetan border demarcation. It is China's illegal occupation of Tibet, which has given it direct access to the Indian sub-continent. The Chinese authorities have attempted to confuse the issues by claiming that Tibet has always been a part of China. This is untrue. Tibet was a fully independent state when the People's Liberation Army invaded the country in 1949/50.

Since Tibetan emperors unified Tibet, over a thousand years ago, our country was able to maintain its independence until the middle of this century. At times Tibet extended its influence over neighboring countries and peoples and, in other periods, came itself under the influence of powerful foreign rulers - the Mongol Khans, The Gorkhas of Nepal, The Manchu Emperors and the British in India.

It is, of course, not uncommon for states to be subjected to foreign influence or interference. Although so-called satellite relationships are perhaps the clearest examples of this, most major power exert influence over less powerful allies or neighbors. As the most authoritative legal studies have shown, in Tibet's case, the country's occasional subjection to foreign influence never entailed a loss of independence. And there can be no doubt that when Peking's communist armies entered Tibet, Tibet was in all respects an independent state.

China's aggression, condemned by virtually all nations of the free world, was flagrant violation of international law. As China's military occupation of Tibet continues, the world should remember that

though Tibetans have lost their freedom, under international law Tibet today is still an independent state under illegal occupation.

It is not my purpose to enter into a political/legal discussion here concerning Tibet's status. I just wish to emphasize the obvious and undisputed fact that we Tibetans are a distinct people with our own culture, language, religion and history. But for China's occupation, Tibet would still, today, fulfill its natural role as a buffer state maintaining and promoting peace in Asia.

It is my sincere desire, as well as that of the Tibetan people, to restore to Tibet her invaluable role, by converting the entire country comprising the three Provinces of U-Tsang, Kham and Amdo once more into a place of stability, peace, and harmony. In the best of Buddhist tradition, Tibet would extend its services and hospitality to all that further the cause of world peace and the well-being of mankind and the natural environment we share.

Despite the holocaust inflicted upon our people in the past decades of occupation, I have always strived to find a solution through direct and honest discussions with the Chinese. In 1982, following the change of leadership in China and establishment of direct contacts with the government in Peking, I sent my representatives to Peking to open talks concerning the future of my country and people.

We entered the dialogue with a sincere and positive attitude and with a willingness to take into account the legitimate needs of the People's Republic of China. I had hoped that this attitude would be reciprocated and that a solution could eventually be found which would satisfy and safeguard the aspirations and interests of both parties. Unfortunately, China has consistently responded to our efforts in a defensive manner, as though our detailing of Tibet's very real difficulties was criticism for its own sake.

To our even greater dismay, the Chinese government misused this opportunity for genuine dialogue. Instead of addressing the real issues facing the six million Tibetan people, China attempted to reduce the question of Tibet to a discussion of my own personal status.

It is against this background, and in response to the tremendous support and encouragement. I have been given by you and other persons I have met during this trip, that I wish today to clarify the principle issues and to propose, in a spirit of openness and conciliation, a first step towards a lasting solution. I hope this may contribute to a future of friendship and cooperation with all of our neighbors, including the Chinese people.

This peace plan contains five basic components:

1. Transformation of the whole Tibet into a zone of peace.
2. Abandonment of China's population transfer policy which threatens the very existence of the Tibetans as a people;
3. Respect for the Tibetan people's fundamental human rights and democratic freedoms;
4. Restoration and protection of Tibet's natural environment and the abandonment of China's use of Tibet for the production of nuclear weapons and dumping of nuclear waste;
5. Commencement of earnest negotiations on the future status of Tibet and of relations between the Tibetan and Chinese peoples.

Let me explain these five components.

I

I propose that the whole of Tibet, including the eastern provinces of Kham and Amdo, be transformed into a zone of "Ahimsa", a Hindi term used to mean a state of peace and non-violence.

The establishment of such a peace zone would be in keeping with Tibet's historical role as a peaceful and neutral Buddhist nation and buffer state separating the continent's great powers. It would also be in keeping with Nepal's proposal to proclaim Nepal a peace zone and with China's declared support for such a proclamation. The peace zone proposed by Nepal would have a much greater impact if it were to include Tibet and neighboring areas.

The establishment of a peace zone in Tibet would require withdrawal of Chinese troops and military installations from the country, which would enable India also to withdraw troops and military

installations from the Himalayan regions bordering Tibet. This would be achieved under an international agreement, which would satisfy China's legitimate security needs and build trust amongst Tibetans, Indians, Chinese and other peoples of the region. This is in everyone's best interest, particularly that of China and India, as it would enhance their security, while reducing the economic burden of maintaining high troop concentrations on the disputed Himalayan border.

Historically, relations between China and India were never strained. It was only when Chinese armies marched into Tibet creating for the first time a common border, that tensions arose between these two powers, ultimately leading to the 1962 war. Since then numerous dangerous incidents have continued to occur. A restoration of good relations between the world's two most populous countries would be greatly facilitated if a large and friendly buffer region separated them - as they were throughout history - by a large and friendly buffer region.

To improve relations between the Tibetan people and the Chinese, the first requirement is the creation of trust. After the holocaust of the last decades in which over one million Tibetans - one sixth of the population - lost their lives and at least as many lingered in prison camps because of their religious beliefs and love of freedom, only a withdrawal of Chinese troops could start a genuine process of reconciliation. The vast occupation force in Tibet is a daily reminder to the Tibetans of the oppression and suffering they have all experienced. A troop withdrawal would be an essential signal that in future a meaningful relationship might be established with the Chinese, based on friendship and trust.

II

The population transfer of Chinese into Tibet, which the government in Peking pursues in order to force a "final solution" to the Tibetan problem by reducing the Tibetan population to an insignificant and disenfranchised minority in Tibet itself, must be stopped.

The massive transfer of Chinese civilians into Tibet in violation of the Fourth Geneva Convention (1949), threatens the very existence of the Tibetans as a distinct people. In the eastern parts of our country, the Chinese now greatly outnumber Tibetans. In the Amdo province, for example, where I was born, there are, according to Chinese statistics, 2.5 million Chinese and only 750,000 Tibetans. Even in the so-called Tibet Autonomous Region (i.e., central and western Tibet), Chinese government sources now confirm that Chinese outnumber Tibetans.

The Chinese population transfer policy is not new. It has been systematically applied to other areas before. Earlier in this century, the Manchus were a distinct race with their own culture and traditions. Today only two to three million Manchurians are left in Manchuria, where 75 million Chinese have settled. In Eastern Turkestan, which the Chinese now call Xinjiang, the Chinese population has grown from 200,000 in 1949 to 7 million, more than half of the total population of 13 million. In the wake of the Chinese colonization of Inner Mongolia, Chinese number 8.5 million, Mongols 2.5 million.

Today in the whole of Tibet 7.5 million Chinese settlers have already been sent, outnumbering the Tibetan population of 6 million. In central and western Tibet, now referred to by the Chinese as the “Tibet Autonomous Region”, Chinese sources admit the 1.9 million Tibetans already constitute a minority of the region’s population. These numbers do not take the estimated 300,000-500,000 troops in Tibet into account - 250,000 of them in the so-called Tibet Autonomous Region.

For the Tibetans to survive as a people, it is imperative that the population transfer is stopped and Chinese settlers return to China. Otherwise, Tibetans will soon be no more than a tourist attraction and relic of a noble past.

III

Fundamental human rights and democratic freedoms must be respected in Tibet. The Tibetan people must once again be free to

develop culturally, intellectually, economically and spiritually and to exercise basic democratic freedoms.

Human rights violations in Tibet are among the most serious in the world. Discrimination is practiced in Tibet under a policy of “apartheid” which the Chinese call “segregation and assimilation”. Tibetans are, at best, second class citizens in their own country. Deprived of all basic democratic rights and freedoms, they exist under a colonial administration in which all real power is wielded by Chinese officials of the Communist party and the army.

Although the Chinese government allows Tibetans to rebuild some Buddhist monasteries and to worship in them, it still forbids serious study and teaching of religion. Only a small number of people, approved by the Communist Party, are permitted to join the monasteries. While Tibetans in exile exercise their democratic rights under a constitution promulgated by me in 1963, thousands of our countrymen suffer in prisons and labor camps in Tibet for their religious or political conviction.

IV

Serious efforts must be made to restore the natural environment in Tibet. Tibet should not be used for the production of nuclear weapons and the dumping of nuclear waste.

Tibetans have a great respect for all forms of life. This inherent feeling is enhanced by the Buddhist faith, which prohibits the harming of all sentient beings, whether human or animal. Prior to the Chinese invasion, Tibet was an unspoiled wilderness sanctuary in a unique natural environment. Sadly, in the past decades the wildlife and the forests of the Tibet have been almost totally destroyed by the Chinese. The effects on Tibet’s delicate environment have been devastating. What little is left in Tibet must be protected and efforts must be made to restore the environment to its balanced state.

China uses Tibet for the production of nuclear weapons and may also have stated dumping nuclear waste in Tibet. Not only does China plan to dispose of its own nuclear waste but also that of

other countries, who have already agreed to pay Peking to dispose of their toxic materials.

The dangers this presents are obvious. Not only living generation, but also future generations are threatened by China's lack of concern for Tibet's unique and delicate environment.

V

Negotiations on the future status of Tibet and the relationship between the Tibetan and Chinese peoples should be started in earnest.

We wish to approach this subject in a reasonable and realistic way, in a spirit of frankness and conciliation and with a view to finding a solution that is in the long term interest of all: the Tibetans, the Chinese, and all other peoples concerned. Tibetans and Chinese are distinct peoples, each with own country, history, culture, language and way of life. Differences among peoples must be recognized and respected. They need not, however, form obstacles to genuine co-operation where this is in the mutual benefit of both peoples. It is my sincere belief that if the concerned parties were to meet and discuss their future with an open mind and a sincere desire to find a satisfactory and just solution, a breakthrough could be achieved. We must all exert ourselves to be reasonable and wise, and to meet in a spirit of frankness and understanding.

Let me end on a personal note. I wish to thank you for the concern and support which you and so many of your colleagues and fellow citizens have expressed for the plight of oppressed people everywhere. The fact that you have publicly shown your sympathy for us Tibetans has already had a positive impact on the lives of our people inside Tibet. I ask for your continued support at this critical time in our country's history.

Thank you.

*Address to the United States Congressional Human Rights
Caucus in Washington, D.C., September 21, 1987.*

3. Ecology and the Human Heart

According to Buddhist teaching, there is a very close interdependence between the natural environment and the sentient beings living in it. Some of my friends have told me that basic human nature is somewhat violent, but I told them I disagree. If we examine different animals, for examples, those whose very survival depends on taking others lives, such as tigers or lions, we learnt that their basic nature provides them with sharp fangs and claws. Peaceful animals, such as deer, which are completely vegetarian, are gentler and have smaller teeth and no claws. From that viewpoint we human beings have a non-violent nature. As to the question of human survival, human beings are social animals. In order to survive we need companions. Without other human beings there is simply no possibility of surviving; that is a law of nature.

Since I deeply believe that human beings are basically gentle by nature, I feel that we should not only maintain gentle, peaceful relations with our fellow human beings but also that is very important to extend the same kind of attitude toward the natural environment. Morally speaking, we should be concerned for our whole environment.

Then there is another viewpoint, not just a question of ethics but a question of our own survival. The environment is very important not only for this generation but also for future generations. If we exploit the environment in extreme ways, even though we may get some money or other benefit from it now, in the long run we ourselves will suffer and future generations will suffer. When the environment changes, climatic conditions also change. When they change dramatically, the economy and many other things change as well. Even our physical health will be greatly affected. So this is not merely a moral question but also a question of our own survival.

Therefore, in order to succeed in the protection and conservation of the natural environment, I think it is important first of all to

bring about an internal balance within human beings themselves. The abuse of the environment, which has resulted in such harm to the human community, arose out of ignorance of the importance of the environment. I think it is essential to help people to understand this. We need to teach people that the environment has a direct bearing on our own benefit.

I am always talking about the importance of compassionate thought. As I said earlier, even from your own selfish viewpoint, you need other people. So, if you develop concern for other people's welfare, share other people's suffering, and help them, ultimately you will benefit. If you think only of yourself and forget about others, ultimately you will lose. That is also something like a law of nature.

It is quite simple: if you do not smile at people, but frown at them, they respond similarly, don't they? If you deal with other people in a very sincere, open way, they behave similarly. Every body wants to have friends and does not want enemies. The proper way to create friends is to have a warm heart, not simply money or power. The friend of power and the friend of money are something different: These are not true friends. True friends should be real friends of heart, shouldn't they? I am always telling people that those friends who come around when you have money and power are not truly your friends, but friends of money and power, because as soon as the money and power disappear, those friends are also ready to leave. They are not reliable.

Genuine, human friends stand by whether you are successful or unlucky and always share your sorrow and burdens. The way to make such friends is not by being angry, nor by having good education or intelligence, but by having a good heart.

To think more deeply, if you must be selfish, then be wisely selfish, not narrow-mindedly selfish. The key thing is the sense of universal responsibility; that is the real source of strength, the real source of happiness. If our generation exploits everything available – the trees, the water, and the minerals – without any care for the coming generations or the future, then we are at fault, aren't we? But if we

have a genuine sense of universal responsibility as our central motivation, then our relations with the environment will be well balanced, and so will our relations with our neighbors, both domestic and international.

Another important question is: What is consciousness, what is the mind? In western world during the last one or two centuries there has been great emphasis on science and technology, which mainly deal with matter. Today some nuclear physicists and neurologists say that when you investigate particles in a very detailed way, there is some kind of influence from the side of the observer, the knower. What is this knower? A simple answer is: A human being, the scientist. How does the scientist know? With the brain, Western scientists have identified only a few hundreds so far. Now, whether you call it mind, brain, or consciousness, there is a relationship between brain and mind and also mind and matter. I think this is important. I feel it is possible to hold some sort of dialogue between Eastern Philosophy and Western science on the basis of this relationship.

In any case, these days we human beings are very much involved in the external world, while we neglect the internal world. We do need scientific development and material development in order to survive and to increase the general benefit and prosperity, but equally as much we need mental peace. Yet no doctor can give you an injection of mental peace, and no market can sell it to you. If you go to a supermarket with millions and millions of dollars, you can buy anything, but if you go there and ask for peace of mind, people will laugh. And if you ask a doctor for genuine peace of mind, not the mere sedation you get from taking some kind of pill or injection, the doctor cannot help you.

Even today's sophisticated computers cannot provide you with mental peace. Mental peace must come from the mind. Everyone wants happiness and pleasure, but if we compare physical pleasure and physical pain with mental pleasure and mental pain, we find that the mind is more effective, predominant, and superior. Thus it is worthwhile adopting certain methods to increase mental peace, and in order to do that it is important to know more about the

mind. When we talk about preservation of the environment, it is related to many other things. The key point is to have genuine sense of universal responsibility, based on love and compassion, and clear awareness.

*Excerpt from **My Tibet** (Text by H.H.the Fourteenth Dalai Lama: Photographs and Introduction by Galen Rowell) Thames and Hudson Ltd., London, 1990 (pp 53-54).*



4. Universal Responsibility and the Environment

As a boy studying Buddhism, I was taught the importance of a caring attitude toward the environment. Our practice of non-violence applies not just to human beings but to all sentient beings – any living thing that has a mind. Where there is a mind, there are feelings such as pain, pleasure, and joy. No sentient being wants pain: all wants happiness instead. I believe that all sentient beings share those feelings at some basic level.

In Buddhism practice we get so used to this idea of non-violence and the ending of all suffering that we become accustomed to not harming or destroying anything indiscriminately. Although we do not believe that trees or flowers have minds, we treat them also with respect. Thus we share a sense of universal responsibility for both mankind and nature.

Our belief in reincarnation is one example of our concern for the future. If you think that you will be reborn, you are likely to say to yourself, I have to preserve such and such because my future reincarnation will be able to continue with these things. Even though there is a chance you may be reborn as a creature, perhaps even on a different planet, the idea of reincarnation gives you reason to have direct concern about this planet and future generations.

In the West when you speak of “humanity,” you usually mean only our existing generation of human beings. Past humanity is already gone. The future, like death, has yet to come. Western ideas usually deal with the practical side of things for only this present generation of human beings.

Tibetan feelings about the environment are based entirely on religion. They are derived from the whole Tibetan way of life, not just from Buddhism. For example, consider Buddhism in Japan or Thailand, in environments different from ours. Their culture and their attitude are not the same as ours. Our unique environment

has strongly influenced us. We don't live on a small, heavily populated island. Historically, we have had little anxiety with our vast area, low population, and distant neighbors. We haven't felt as oppressed as people in many other human communities.

It is very possible to practice the essence of a faith or culture without practicing a religion. Our Tibetan culture, although highly influenced by Buddhism, did not gain all its philosophy from Buddhism. I once suggested to an organization dealing with Tibetan refugees that it would be interesting to do some research on how much our people have been affected by their approach to life itself in Tibet. What are the factors that make Tibetans generally happy and calm? People are always looking for answer in our unique religion, forgetting that our environment is just as unusual.

Concern for the environment is not necessarily holy, nor does it always require compassion. We Buddhists express compassion for all sentient beings, but this compassion is not necessarily extended to every rock or tree or house. Most of us are somewhat concerned about our own house, but not really compassionate about it. We keep it in order so that we can live and be happy. We know that to have happy feelings in our house we must take care of it. So our feelings may be of concern rather than compassion.

Similarly, our planet is our house, and we must keep it in order and take care of it if we are genuinely concerned about happiness for ourselves, our children, our friends, and other sentient beings who share this great house with us. If we think of the planet as our house or as our mother – Mother Earth – we automatically feel concern for our environment. Today we understand that the future of humanity very much depends on our planet, and that the future of the planet very much depends on humanity. But this has not always been so clear to us. Until now, you see, Mother Earth has somehow tolerated sloppy house habits. But now human use, population, and technology have reached that certain stage where Mother Earth no longer accepts our presence with silence. In many ways she is now telling us, “My children are behaving badly,” she is warning us that there are limits to our actions.

The Tibetan Buddhist attitude is one of contentment, and there may be some connection here with our attitude toward the environment. We don't indiscriminately consume. We put a limit on our consumption. We admire simply living and individual responsibility. We have always considered ourselves as part of our environment, but not just any part. Our ancient scriptures speak of the container and the contained. The world is the container – our house and we are the contained- the contents of the container. From these simple facts we deduce a special relationship, because without the container, the contents cannot be contained. Without the contents, the container contains nothing, it's meaningless.

In my Five-Point Peace Plan I have proposed that all of Tibet become a sanctuary, a zone of peace. Tibet was that once, but with no official designation. Peace means harmony: harmony between people, between people and animals, between sentient beings and the environment. Visitors from all over the world could come to Tibet to experience peace and harmony. Instead of building big hotels with many storeys and many rooms, we would make small buildings, more like private homes, that would be in better harmony with nature.

It is not at all wrong for humans to use nature to make useful things, but we must not exploit nature to make useful things, but we must not exploit nature unnecessarily. It is good to live in a house, to have medicines, and to be able to drive somewhere in a car. In the right hands, a machine is not a luxury, but something very useful. A camera, for example, can be used to make pictures that promote understanding.

But everything has its limit. Too much consumption or effort to make money is no good. Neither is too much contentment. In principle, contentment is a goal, but pure contentment becomes almost like suicide, doesn't it? I think the Tibetans had, in certain fields, too much contentment. And we lost our country. These days we cannot afford too much contentment about the environment.

Peace and survival of life on earth as we know it are threatened by human activities that lack a commitment to humanitarian values. Destruction of nature and natural resources results from ignorance, greed, and lack of respect for the earth's living things. This lack of respect extends even to the earth's human descendants, the future generations who will inherit a vastly degraded planet if world peace doesn't become a reality and if destruction of the natural environment continues at the present rate.

Our ancestors viewed the earth as rich and bountiful, which it is. Many people in the past also saw nature as inexhaustibly sustainable, which we now know is the case only if we care for it. It is not difficult to forgive destruction in the past that resulted from ignorance. Today, however, we have access to more information. It is essential that we re-examine ethically what we have inherited, what we are responsible for, and what we will pass on to coming generations.

Clearly this is a pivotal generation. Global communication is possible, yet confrontations take place more often than meaningful dialogues for peace. Our marvels of science and technology are matched, if not outweighed, by many current tragedies, including human starvation in some parts of the world and extinction of other life forms. Exploration of outer space takes place at the same time the earth's own oceans, seas, and freshwater areas grow increasingly polluted, and their life forms are still largely unknown or misunderstood. Many of the earth's habitats, animals, plants, insects and even microorganisms that we know as rare may not be known at all by future generations. We have the capability and the responsibility. We must act before it is too late.

*Excerpt from **My Tibet** (Text by H.H.the Fourteenth Dalai Lama: Photographs and Introduction by Galen Rowell) Thames and Hudson Ltd., London, 1990 (pp 79-80) .*



5. The Importance of Tree Planting and its Protection

I have remarked on several occasions about the importance of tree planting both in India, our current home, and in Tibet as well. Today, as a symbolic gesture we are having a tree planting ceremony here in the settlement. Fortunately, the movement towards a deeper commitment to environmental protection through planting new trees and taking care of the existing ones, is rapidly increasing all over the world. At the global level, trees and forests are closely linked with weather patterns and also the maintenance of a crucial balance in nature. Hence, the task of environment protection is a universal responsibility of all of us. I think that is extremely important for the Tibetans living in the settlements to not only take a keen interest in the cause of environmental protection, but also to implement this ideal in action by planting new trees. In this way, we will be making an important gesture to the world in demonstrating our global concern and at the same time making our own little but significant, contribution to the cause.

If we look around, we can now see that those houses in the monasteries and in various camps where people have planted fruit trees, now enjoy great benefits as a consequence of their action. First of all, if there is a tree in your courtyard it creates around it an atmosphere of natural beauty and serenity. It is also obvious that you can eat the fruits from the tree, sit under it and enjoy the cool shade. What was required on your part was a little patience to allow some time for the tree to grow up.

Finally, I would like to make a suggestion regarding the use of your farmland in the settlement. In this settlement you have already initiated a project of planting fruit trees on farmlands. I think it is a very good plan. By planting fruit trees on your land, we can not only ensure that the farmland remains productive, but also you will have fruits to eat. In short, I would like to again emphasize that it is extremely

important to plant new trees and protect the ones already growing around you.

*Speech at a special ceremony held in Doeguling Tibetan Settlement, Mundgod, South India, on December 6, 1990. Adapted from **Appropriate Technology for Tibetan's (ApTibet) Newsletter** No. 5, September 1991.*



6. A Clean Environment is a Human Right

Tibet should not be used for the production of nuclear weapons and the dumping of nuclear waste. Tibetans have a great respect for all forms of life. This inherent feeling is enhanced by our Buddhist faith, which prohibits the harming of all sentient beings, whether human or animal. Prior to the Chinese invasion, Tibet was a fresh, beautiful, unspoiled wilderness sanctuary in a unique natural environment.

Sadly, during the past few decades, the wildlife of Tibet has been almost totally destroyed and, in many places, irreparable damage has been done to its forests. The overall effect on Tibet's delicate environment has been devastating – particularly since the country's altitude and aridity mean that the process of restoring vegetation will take much longer than in lower, wetter regions. For this reason, what little is left must be protected and efforts made to reverse the effects of China's iniquitous and wanton destruction of the Tibetan environment.

In doing so, the first priority will be to halt the production of nuclear weaponry and, even more importantly, to prevent the dumping of nuclear waste. Apparently, China plans not only to dispose of its own but also to import other country's waste, in exchange for hard currency. The danger this represents is obvious. Not only living generations, but also future generations are threatened. Further more, the inevitable problems this would cause locally could so easily turn into a catastrophe of the global proportions. Giving waste to China, which might have access to large areas of lightly populated land but has only crude technology, will likely prove only a short-term solution to the problem.

If I were actually to vote in an election, it would be for one of the environmental parties. One of the most positive developments in the world recently has been the growing awareness of the importance of nature. There is nothing sacred or holy about this. Taking care of our planet is like taking care of our houses. Since we human beings

come from Nature, there is no point in our going against Nature, which is why I say the environment is not a matter of religion or ethics or morality. These are luxuries, since we can survive without them. But we will not survive if we continue to go against Nature.

We have to accept this. If we unbalance Nature, humankind will suffer. Furthermore, as people alive today, we must consider future generations: a clean environment is a human right like any other. It is therefore part of our responsibility towards others to ensure that the world we pass on is as healthy, if not healthier, than when we found it. This is not quite such a difficult proposition as it might sound. For although there is a limit to what we as individuals can do, there is no limit to what a universal response might achieve. It is up to us as individuals to do what we can, however little that may be. Just because switching off the light on leaving the room seems inconsequential, it does not mean that we should not do it.

This is where, as a Buddhist monk, I feel that belief in the concept of karma is very useful in the conduct of daily life. Once you believe in the connection between motivation and its effect, you will become more alert to the effects, which your own actions have upon yourself and others.

Thus, despite the continuing tragedy of Tibet, I find much good in the world. I am especially encouraged that the belief in consumerism as an end in itself seems to be giving way to an appreciation that we humans must conserve the earth's resources. This is very necessary. Human beings are in a sense children of the earth. And, whereas up until now our common Mother tolerated her children's behavior, she is presently showing us that she has reached the limit of her tolerance.

It is my prayer that one day I shall be able to carry this message of concern for the environment and for others to the people of China. Since Buddhism is by no means alien to the Chinese, I believe that I may be able to serve them in a practical way. The last Panchen Lama's predecessor once conducted a Kalachakra initiation ceremony in Peking. If I were to do the same, it would not be without precedent.

For as a Buddhist monk, my concern extends to all members of the human family and, indeed, to all suffering sentient beings.

I believe that this suffering is caused by ignorance, and that people inflict pain on others in pursuit of their own happiness or satisfaction. Yet true happiness comes from a sense of inner peace and contentment, which in turn must be achieved through cultivation of altruism, of love, of compassion, and through the elimination of anger, selfishness and greed.

To some people this may sound naïve, but I would remind them that, no matter what part of the world we come from, fundamentally we are all the same human beings. We all seek happiness and try to avoid suffering. We have the same basic needs and concerns. Furthermore, all of us human beings want freedom and the right to determine our own destiny as individuals. That is human nature. The great changes taking place everywhere in the world, from Eastern Europe to Africa, is a clear indication of this.

At the same time, the problems we face today – violent conflicts, destruction of Nature, poverty, hunger, and so on – are mainly problems created by humans. They can be resolved – but only through human effort, understanding and the development of a sense of brotherhood and sisterhood. To do this, we need to cultivate a Universal Responsibility for one another and for the planet we share, based on a good heart and awareness.

Now, although I have found my own Buddhist religion helpful in generating love and compassion, I am convinced that these qualities can be developed by any one, with or without religion. I further believe that all religions pursue the same goals: those of cultivating goodness and bringing happiness to all human beings. Though the means might appear different, the ends are the same.

With the ever- growing impact of science on our lives, religion and spirituality have a greater role to play in reminding us of our humanity. There is no contradiction between the two. Each gives

us valuable insights into the other. Both science and the teachings of the Buddha tell us of the fundamental unity of all things.

Finally, I would like to share with my readers a short prayer, which gives me great inspiration and determination:

For as long as space endures,
And for as long as living beings remain,
Until then may I, too, abide
To dispel the misery of the world.

*Adapted from the chapter Universal Responsibility and the Good Heart in **Freedom in Exile: The autobiography of His Holiness the Dalai Lama of Tibet**, Hodder and Stoughton, London, 1990 (pp 280-299).*



7. A Green Environment for Now and the Future

In the past, the major need of people in this world was arable land. Man did not have to think about animate things. However, now the adverse effects on forests through over-population and the development of various chemical elements in the atmosphere have led to irregular rainfall and global warming. This global warming has brought changes in climate, including making perennial snow mountains melt, thereby adversely affecting not only human beings but also other living species.

This dangerous situation is being taken very seriously by the world. In the past the perennial snow mountains of Tibet had very thick snow. Older people say that these mountains were covered with thick snow when they were young and that the snows are getting sparser which may be an indication of the end of the world. It is a fact that climate change is a slow process taking thousands of years to realize its effect. Living beings and plant life on this planet also undergo change accordingly. Man's physical structure too changes from generation to generation along with the change climatic conditions.

Because of the growth in the population, a large number of trees are cut for fuel, and to reclaim land for agricultural cultivation. In the case of Tibet, too, the Chinese have now destroyed its ancient trees in a similar way to shaving a man's off. This is not simply the destruction of trees but it also means harming what belongs to the Tibetans. Similarly, the continuing decline in forests in many parts of the world, including America, is adversely affecting the already changing global climate, thus upsetting the lives, not only of mankind, but also of all living beings.

Similarly, the harmful effect on the atmosphere brought about by chemical emissions in industrialized countries is a very dangerous sign. Although this is a new thing for us Tibetan, the world is paying a lot of attention to this problem. It is the responsibility of us, who

speak of the welfare of all sentient beings, to contribute towards this.

Since I too have a responsibility in this matter, (i.e. to work for the protection of the environment and to see that the present and future generations of mankind can make use of refreshing shade and fruits of trees), I bought these seeds of fruit-bearing trees with part of my Nobel Peace Prize money to be distributed now, to people representing different regions (all the continents of the world are represented here) during this Kalachakra gathering. These seeds have been kept near the Kalachakra mandala for purification and blessings. Since these include seeds of apricot, walnut, papaya, guava, etc., suitable for planting under varying geographical conditions, experts in respective places should be consulted on their planting and care and, thus, you all should see my sincere aspiration is fulfilled.

This speech was made during the Kalachakra Initiation at Sarnath, India, on December 29, 1990, when His Holiness distributed seeds of fruit-bearing trees to encourage environmental protection through planting.



8. Spirituality and Nature

I think you came here with some expectation, but essentially I've nothing to offer you. Simply, I'll try to share some of my own experiences and my views. You see, taking care of the planet is nothing special, nothing sacred, and nothing holy. It is something like taking care of our own house. We have no other planet or house except this one. Although there are a lot of disturbances and problems, this is our only alternative. We can't go to other planets. For example, take the moon; it looks or appears beautiful from a distance but if you go there and settle there it is horrible. This is what I think. So you see, our blue planet is much better and happier. So, therefore, we have to care of our own place or house or planet.

After all, the human being is a social animal. I often tell my friends that they have no need to study philosophy, these professional, complicated subjects. By simply looking at these innocent animals, insects, ants, bees, etc., quite often I develop some kind of respect for them. How? Because they have no religion, no constitution, no police force, nothing. But they live in harmony through the natural law of existence or nature's law or system.

We human beings, what is wrong with us? We human beings have such intelligence and human wisdom. I think we often use human intelligence in a wrong way or direction. As a result, in a way, we are doing certain actions which essentially go against basic human nature.

From a certain viewpoint, religion is a little bit of a luxury. If you have religion, very good; even without religion you can survive and you can manage, but without human affection we can't survive.

Although anger and hatred, like compassion and love, are part of our mind, still I believe the dominant force of our mind is compassion and human affection. Therefore, usually I call these human qualities spirituality. Not necessarily as a religious message or religion in that sense. Science and technology together with

human affection will be constructive. Science and technology under the control of hatred will be destructive.

If we practice religion properly, or genuinely, or religion is not something outside but in our hearts. The essence of any religion is good heart. Sometimes I call love and compassion a universal religion. This is my religion. Complicated philosophy, this and that, sometimes create more trouble and problems. If these sophisticated philosophies are useful for the development of good heart, then good: use them fully. If these complicated philosophies or systems become an obstacle to a good heart then better to leave them. This is what I feel.

If we look closely at human nature affection is the key to a good heart. I think the mother is a symbol of compassion. Every one has a seed of good heart. The only thing is whether we take care or not to realize the value of compassion.

*An address to the four-day ecumenical **Middlebury Symposium on religion and the environment**, Middlebury College, Vermont, USA, delivered on September 14, 1990.*



9. Thinking Globally: A Universal Task

Scientific predictions of environmental change are difficult for ordinary human beings to comprehend fully. We hear about hot temperatures and rising sea levels, increasing cancer rates, vast population growth, depletion of resources, and extinction of species. Human activity everywhere is hastening to destroy key elements of the natural eco-systems all living beings depend on.

These threatening developments are individually drastic and together amazing. The world's population has tripled in this century alone and is expected to double or triple in the next. The global economy may grow by a factor of five or ten including with it extreme rates of energy consumption, carbon dioxide production, and deforestation. It is hard to imagine all things actually happening in our lifetime and in the lives of our children. We have to consider the prospects of global suffering and environmental degradation unlike anything in human history.

I think, however, there is good news in that now we will definitely have to find new ways to survive together on this planet. In this century we have seen enough war, poverty, pollution, and suffering. According to Buddhist teaching, such things happen as the result of ignorance and selfish actions, because we often fail to see the essential common relation of all beings. The earth is showing us warnings and clear indications of the vast effects and negative potential of misdirected human behavior.

To counteract these harmful practices we can teach ourselves to be more aware of our own mutual dependence. Every sentient being wants happiness instead of pain. So we share a common basic feeling. We can develop right action to help the earth and each other based on a better motivation. Therefore, I always speak of the importance of developing a genuine sense of universal responsibility. When we are motivated by wisdom and compassion, the results of our actions benefit everyone, not just our individual selves or some immediate

convenience. When we are able to recognize and forgive ignorant actions of the past, we gain the strength to constructively solve the problems of the present.

We should extend this attitude to be concerned for our whole environment. As a basic principle, I think it is better to help if you can, and if you cannot help, at least try not to do harm. This is an especially suitable guide when there is so much yet to understand about the complex interrelations of diverse and unique eco-systems. The earth is our home and our mother. We need to respect and take care of her. This is easy to understand today.

We need knowledge to care for ourselves, every part of the Earth and the life upon it, and all of the future generations as well. This means that education about the environment is of great importance to everyone. Scientific learning and technological progress are essential for improving the quality of life in the modern world. Still more important is the simple practice of getting to know and better appreciate ourselves and our natural surroundings, whether we are children or adults. If we have a true appreciation for others and resist acting out of ignorance we will take care of the Earth.

In the biggest sense, environmental education means learning to maintain a balanced way of life. All religions agree that we cannot find lasting inner satisfaction based on selfish desires and acquiring the comforts of the material things. Even if we could, there are now so many people that the earth would not sustain us for long. I think it is much better to practice enjoying simple peace of mind. We can share the earth and take care of it together, rather than trying to possess it, destroying the beauty of life in the process.

Ancient cultures that have adapted to their natural surroundings can offer special insights on structuring human societies to exist in balance with the environment. For examples, Tibetans are uniquely familiar with life on the Himalayan Plateau. This has evolved into a long history of a civilization that took care not to overwhelm and destroy its fragile eco-system. Tibetans have long appreciated the presence of wild animals as symbolic of freedom.

A deep reverence for nature is apparent in much of Tibetan art and ceremony. Spiritual development thrived despite limited material progress. Just as species may not adapt to relatively sudden environmental changes, human cultures also need to be treated with special care to ensure survival. Therefore, learning about the useful ways of people and preserving their culture heritage is also a part of learning to care for the environment.

I try always to express the value of having a good heart. This simple aspect of human nature can be nourished to great power. With a good heart and wisdom you have right motivation and will automatically do what needs to be done. If people begin to act with genuine compassion for every one, we can still protect each other and the natural environment. This is much easier than having to adapt to the severe and incomprehensible environmental conditions projected for the future.

Now on a close examination, the human mind, the human heart, and the environment are inseparably linked together. In this sense, environmental education helps to generate both the understanding and love we need to create the best opportunity there has ever been for peace and lasting coexistence.

*Reprinted from **EPA Journal: A Magazine on National and Global Environmental Perspectives**. Published by the United States Environmental Protection Agency, Washington D.C., September/October 1991, Vol. 17, Number 4.*



10. Caring for the Earth

I am pleased to know the World Conservation Union is launching a world- wide campaign on the theme of Caring for the Earth on 21st October 1991.

The earth is not only the common heritage of all humankind but also the ultimate source of life. By over-exploiting its resources we are undermining the very basis of our own life. All around, signs abound of the destruction caused by human activity and of the degradation of nature. Therefore, the protection and conservation of the earth is not a question of morality or ethics but a question of our survival. How we respond to this challenge will affect not only this generation but also many generations to come.

In the case of such global issues as the conservation of the Earth, and indeed in tackling all problems, the human mind is the key factor. Whether they are problems of economics, international relations, science, technology, medicine or ecology, although these issues seem to be beyond any one individual's capacity, where the problem begins and where the answer must first be sought is within. In order to change the external situation we must first change within ourselves. If we want a beautiful garden we must first have a blueprint in the imagination, a vision. Then that idea can be implemented and the external garden can materialize. Destruction of nature resources results from ignorance, lack of respect for the Earth's living things, and greed.

In the first place we must strive to overcome these states of mind by developing an awareness of the interdependent nature of all phenomena, an attitude of wishing not to harm other living creatures and an understanding of the need for compassion. Because of the interdependent nature of everything we cannot hope to solve the multifarious problems with a one-sided or self-centered attitude. History shows us how often in the past people have failed to cooperate. Our failures in the past are the result of ignorance of our own interdependent nature. What we need now is a holistic approach

towards problems combined with a genuine sense of universal responsibility based on love and compassion.

I offer my best wishes and prayers for the success of this project in creating a better awareness of the need to care more about the Earth.

*This statement, dated September 20, 1991, marked the launching of a campaign on the theme of **Caring for the Earth** on October 21, 1991 by the World Conservation Union.*



15. A Buddhist Concept of Nature

Tonight I will say something about the Buddhist concept of nature.

Nagarjuna said that for a system where emptiness is possible, it is also possible to have functionality, and since functionality is possible, emptiness is also possible. So when we talk about nature, the ultimate nature is emptiness. What is meant by emptiness, or shunyata? It is not the emptiness of existence but rather the emptiness of true or independent existence, which means that things exist by dependence upon other factors.

So whether it is the environment that is inhabited, or the inhabitants, both of them are composed of four or five basic elements. These elements are earth, wind, fire, water and vacuum, that is space. About space, in the Kalachakra tantra there is a mention of what is known as the atom of space, particles of space. So that forms the central force of the entire phenomenon. When the entire system of the universe first evolved, it evolved from this central force which is the particle of space, and also a system of universe and would dissolve eventually into this particle of the space. So it is on the basis of these five basic elements that there is a very close inter-relatedness or interrelation between the habitat that is the natural environment and inhabitants, the sentient beings living within it.

Also, when we talk of the elements there are internal elements which are existent inherently within sentient beings; they are also of different levels- some are subtle and some are gross.

So ultimately according to Buddhist teachings the innermost subtle consciousness is the sole sort of creator, itself consisting of five elements, very subtle forms of elements. These subtle elements serve as conditions for producing the internal elements, which form sentient beings, and that in turn causes the existence or evolution of the external elements. So there is a very close interdependence or interrelationship between the environment

and the inhabitants. Within the meaning of interdependency there are many different levels that things are dependent upon casual factors, or upon their own parts, or the conceptual mind, which actually gives the label, the designation.

The topic that we are discussing today is the interrelationship or interdependence between the natural environment and the sentient beings living within it.

Now here, you see, some of my friends told me that basic human nature is something violent. Then I told my friends, I don't think so. If we examine different mammals, say those animals such as tigers or lions that very much depend on other's life for their basic survival these animals because of their basic nature have a special structure, their teeth and long nails, like that. So, those peaceful animals, such as deer, which are completely herbivorous, their teeth and nails are something different; gentler. So from that viewpoint, we human beings belong to the gentle category, isn't that so? Our teeth, our nails, these are very gentle. So I told my friends, I don't agree with your viewpoint. Basically human beings have a non-violent nature.

Also, about the question of human survival, human beings are social animals. In order to survive you need other companions; without other human beings there is simply no possibility to survive; that is nature's law, that is nature.

Since I deeply believe that basically human beings are of a gentle nature so I think the human attitude towards our environment should be gentle. There fore I believe that not only should we keep our relationship with our other fellow human beings very gentle and non-violent, but it is also very important to extend that kind of attitude to the natural environment. I think morally speaking we can think like that and we should all be concerned for our environment.

Then I think there is another viewpoint. In this case it is not a question of morality or ethics, not that question; is a question of our own survival. Not only this generation, but for other

generations, the environment is something very important. If we exploit the natural environment in an extreme way, today we might get some other benefit but in the long run we ourselves will suffer and other generations will suffer. So when the environment changes, climatic conditions also change. When it changes dramatically, economic structures and many other things also change – even our physical body. So you can see the great effect from that change. So from that viewpoint this is not only a question of our own survival.

Therefore, in order to achieve more effective results and in order to succeed in the protection, conservation and preservation of the natural environment, first of all, I think, it is also important to bring about internal balance within human beings themselves. Since negligence of the environment - which has resulted in lots of harm to the human community - came about by ignorance of the very special importance of the environment, I think it is very important first of all to instill this knowledge within human beings. So it is very important to teach or tell people about its importance for our own benefit.

Then, one of the other most important things again, as I am always saying, is the importance of compassionate thought. As I mentioned earlier, even from ones own selfish viewpoint, you need other people. So, by showing concern for other people's welfare, sharing other people's suffering, and by helping other people, ultimately one will gain benefit. If one thinks only of oneself and forgets about others, ultimately one will lose. This also is something like nature's law. I think it is quite simple. If you do not show a smile to other people, and show some kind of bad look or like that, the other side will also give a similar response. Isn't that right? If you show other people a very sincere and open attitude there will also be a similar response. So it is quite simple logic.

Everybody wants friends and does not want enemies. The proper way to create friends is through a warm heart and not simply money or power. Friends of power and friends of money are something different. These are not friends.

A true friend should be a real friend of heart, isn't it so? I am always telling people that those friends who come to you when you have money and power are not your true friends but friends of money and power. Because as soon as your money and power disappear, those friends are also ready to say goodbye, bye-bye. So you see these friends are not reliable. Genuine and true human friends will always share your sorrow, your burdens and will always come to you whether you are successful or unlucky. So the way to create such friend is not through anger, not mere education, not mere intelligence, but by the heart – a good heart.

So, as I always say if you think in a deeper way if you are going to be selfish, then you should be wisely selfish, not narrow minded selfish. From that viewpoint, the key thing is the sense of Universal Responsibility, that is the real source of strength, the real source of happiness.

From that perspective, if in our generation we exploit every available things: trees, water, mineral resources or anything, without bothering about the next generation about the future, that's our guilt, isn't it? So if we have a genuine sense of universal responsibility, as the central motivation and principle, then from that direction our relations with the environment will be well balanced. Similarly with every aspect of relationships, our relations with our neighbors, our family neighbors, or country neighbors, will be balanced from that direction.

Actually, in ancient times many great thinkers, as well as great spiritual masters were produced in this country, India. So, I feel in modern times these great Indian thinkers, such as Mahatma Gandhi as well as some politicians, implemented these noble ideas like *ahimsa* in the political arena. In a certain way India's foreign policy of non-alignment is also related to that kind of moral principle. So I think further expansion, or further development of these noble ideas, or noble actions, in this country is very relevant and very important.

Now in this respect, another thing which I feel to be very important is what is consciousness, what is mind? Up to now, specially I

think in the Western world, during the last one or two centuries science and technology have been very much emphasized and that mainly deals with matter.

Now, today, some of the nuclear physicists and neurologists have started investigating and analyzing particles in a very detailed and deep way. While doing so, they found out some kind of involvement from the observer's side which they sometimes call "the knower". What is "the knower"? Simply speaking it is the being, the human being, like the scientists through which ways do scientists know? I think through the brain. Now, about the brain, Western scientists have not yet fully identified the more than hundred billions of cells of the brain. I think out of a hundred billions only a few hundreds have been identified so far. So now the mind, whether you call it mind or a special energy of the brain, or consciousness, you will see that there is a relationship between the brain and the mind and the mind and matter. This I think is something important. I feel there should be some sort of dialogue between eastern philosophy and Western science on the basis of the relationship between mind and matter.

In any case, today our human mind is very much looking at or very much involved with the external world. I think we are failing to care for or study the internal world.

We need scientific and material developments in order to survive, in order to get benefits and in order to have more prosperity. Equally we need mental peace. Any doctor cannot inject mental peace: no market can sell mental peace or happiness. With millions and millions of rupees you can buy anything but if you go to a supermarket and say I want peace of mind, then people will laugh. And if you ask a doctor, I want genuine peace of mind, not a dull one, you might get one sleeping pill, or some injection. Although you may get rest, the rest is not in the right sense, is it?

So if you want genuine mental peace or mental tranquility the doctor cannot provide it. A machine like the computer, however sophisticated it may be, cannot provide you with mental peace. Mental peace must come from the mind. So every one wants

happiness, pleasure. Now, compare physical pleasure and physical pain with mental pain or mental pleasure and you will find that the mind is superior, more effective and more dominant. Therefore it is worthwhile to increase mental peace through certain methods. In order to do that it is important to know more about mind. That also, I always feel, is very important. I think that is all.

So when you say environment, or preservation of environment, it is related with many things. Ultimately the decision must come from the human heart, isn't that right? So I think the key point is genuine sense of universal responsibility which is based on love, compassion and clear awareness.

Transcript of an address at New Delhi, India, on February 14, 1992.



11. Address at Rio Earth Summit

I am extremely happy and feel great honor to be with you here. My basic belief is that the purpose of our life is happiness, and happiness depends on its own basis. I believe the basic base, or the cause of happiness and satisfaction, is material and spiritual development.

Then again, human beings irrespective of our ability, knowledge, technology are basically a product of nature. So therefore, ultimately, our fate very much depends on nature.

In ancient times I think, when human ability was limited, we were very aware of the importance of nature; and so we respected nature. Then the time came when we developed through science and technology; and we had more ability. Now sometimes it seems people forget about the importance of nature. Sometimes we get some kind of wrong belief that we human beings can control nature with the help of technology. Of course, in certain limited areas we can to a certain extent. But with the globe as a whole it is impossible. Therefore now the time has come to be aware of the importance of nature, the importance of our globe. You see, one day we might find all living things on this planet- including human beings are doomed.

I think one danger is that things like nuclear war are an immediate cause of concern so everybody realizes something is horrible. But damage to the environment happens gradually without much awareness. Once we realize something very obvious to everybody it may be too late. So therefore I think we must realize in time our responsibility to take care of our own world.

I often tell people that the moon and stars when remaining high in the sky look very beautiful, like an ornament. But if we really try to go and settle there on the moon, perhaps a few days may be very nice and some new experience may be very nice and some new experience may be very exciting. But, if we really remain there, I think within a few days we would get very homesick for

our small planet. So this is our only home. Therefore, I think this kind of gathering concerning our environment and the planet is very useful, very important and timely.

And of course things are not easy, so I don't think all problems could be solved at once through such meetings. However, this kind of meeting is very helpful to open eyes.

So, once the human mind wakes up humans such intelligence that we may find certain ways and means to solve problems. But sometimes we just take everything for granted and don't care, and this kind of negligence is also a danger. So, such meetings on a critical situation, if approached with an open human mind and eyes, are important and useful. These are my feelings. Thank you!

*His Holiness the Dalai Lama's press statement at the **United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED)**, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, on June 5, 1992.*



12. Universal Responsibility and the Inner Environment

First of all, I always think that it is very important to consider oneself as one human being or one member of a big human family. Because every human is basically the same irrespective of culture, religion, country or race. It means everyone has the right to be a happy person and the right to overcome suffering. After all the purpose of our very life, I consider, is happiness. This is our birthright.

Then, because of the changing situation today, the realization of oneness of all human beings is now very relevant. In ancient times, if you had that kind of perspective, good. If not, it did not matter. But now, today, in reality, whether we like it or not, every crisis is essentially linked to a global crisis. So talking about my nation, my continent, my family, my religion, my tradition is out of date. Therefore, there is really an urgent need to have a sense of Universal Responsibility and change of our Inner Environment.

This I consider to be the basic foundation of our positive motivation. The prime mover of every human action is the motivation or the determination.

Firstly, our motivation should be simple and sincere. Whether we achieve the goal or not does not matter so long as our motivation is very sincere and we make an attempt. Finally, even if we fail to achieve our goal we won't regret making the effort. If our motivation is not sincere, even if the objective is achieved the person will not be so happy or satisfied deep down. So motivation is very important.

So, any human action, whether the result is positive or negative, largely depends on motivation. If the motivation is sincere then every human action can be positive- including political initiatives. If our motivation is not adequate, not pure, even religion becomes smeared.

So, therefore, things ultimately depend upon proper motivation. I consider the important thing is unshakable determination based upon a genuine sense of brotherhood and sisterhood, or a sense of Universal Responsibility based upon human compassion or affection. That is the proper mental approach. Our goal may not be achieved so easily this way- it may take more time and may face many obstacles. I think right from the beginning, we must adopt that kind of attitude. If one expects to achieve the goal because our motivation is good, our work will be easy, and everyone will come to help, that is not right attitude.

The world, unfortunately, is not pure; there are lots of negative forces. For 33 years I have been telling my fellow Tibetans that we should hope for the best but at the same time prepare with optimism for the worst.

An optimistic attitude is the key factor for success. Right from the beginning, if you hold a pessimistic attitude, even small things may not be achieved. Therefore, to remain optimistic all the time is very important.

As I mentioned earlier, many forms of human activity like religion, politics, technology, science and law, are supposedly meant for the betterment and happiness of humanity. Because of past experience many people feel that politics is something dirty. That is also a wrong concept. In a democratic country practicing democracy effectively, whether we like it or not, political parties must be there. Under such circumstances, if you remain removed from politics, just to criticize or complain or resent, that is not a wise way.

For example, in the field of religion there is also abuse. In the name of humanity, and also in the name of religion, some exploitations and abuses are there. How can you change that just sitting on the sideline? If you only criticize, there won't be much effect. Go into it and try to change things from within. That is the way.

I want to praise the NGOs a little. Basically, every human individual carries responsibility for the benefit or welfare of humanity and for the planet itself, because this planet is our only

home. We have no alternative refuge. Therefore, everyone has the responsibility to care not only for our fellow human beings but also for insects, plants, animals and this very planet.

However, the initiative must come from individuals. But then, in order to make an impact, the unified mobilization of individual forces through various organizations is the only path. So various organizations become very important. I think at a government level action is sometimes not true to desires. This is due to certain policies or reasons and sometimes due to elected leaders being concerned about their re-election.

NGOs have more freedom and opportunity, so in many fields you can do many more and also you can create certain new ideas, new activities and act as a pilot. If this becomes something significant then the government will also follow your lead. Already some cases of this type have happened. So, therefore NGOs have a unique opportunity to contribute. Already you have contributed many things for humanity and planet and I hope you can continue your good work with full co-operation, confidence and determination.

Now, already the East-West division is there, mainly in economic terms. The richer nations, sooner or later, will find some problems because of this gap. So, we have to find ways and means to reduce this gap. In this field both sides should have genuine discussion in the spirit of our world, rather than my nation or my continent. This is to the mutual interest of our mutual future. If one side adopts a defensive attitude, or another side seeks only to complain and criticize, that is not good. Come together and think in terms of one world. Both sides belong to that same world. With this attitude you can achieve many things.

Another thing while we are talking about the gap between richer and poorer nations. There is no point in neglecting ones own community. Among nations there is a big gap between rich and poor people, like India and Brazil. So, a terribly pathetic situation is there. Practically, these are dangerous and critical situations.

Today only one Super Power remains. Last year after the collapse of the Soviet Communist bloc, when I was returning from Europe to India, there was a high official from an African state on my plane. When we reached Delhi Airport we were together for a few minutes. I expressed to him that recent developments in the world are very hopeful and positive; now there is no more danger of a nuclear holocaust. I expected his response to be equally positive. But instead he raised another possibility. Before there were two superpowers, so the Third World can manage between the two. Now there is only one power so we have more fear, more anxiety.

We are not sure what kind of future lies ahead. I think and feel this is quite unfortunate. The reason is not because of the American system of liberty, democracy, and freedom but primarily because of the US military forces. Perhaps economic power also has some relevance there.

Soon after the Gulf War happened I myself made some pledge or resolution that the rest of my life will be committed to the demilitarization of this planet.

Yesterday I heard through BBC that about 18 million people in Africa face the danger of starvation. Of course one immediate cause is drought but another cause is civil war in recent years. A lot of money is being spent on weapons and agriculture is neglected. All these unfortunate experiences are ultimately related to weapons. The military establishment or war is part of human history. But I think, today things are completely changed and now we must find some new way of thinking. After all, we have such beautiful human intelligence but this intelligence certainly is not meant for destruction. If we use our intelligence for destruction it is really unfortunate.

Once I expressed that I consider the worst event on this planet in this century was the October Revolution in Russia. Because, in order to achieve that revolution and in order to sustain that revolution, so much bloodshed happened. Although, as far as original Marxism is concerned, I've deep sympathy, because of its practice and eventual development the outcome was so terrible.

During a certain period weapons in general, and particularly nuclear weapons, did some good that we call deterrent. Now the Berlin Wall has collapsed and Soviet Communist Empire has collapsed. That leaves only Communist China. Now there is no danger from communism, so I think nuclear weapons did their job. Now the time has come to say farewell to these dreadful weapons. We don't need them any more.

When we get seriously ill we need medicine and even some poison is needed. But as soon as one is cured then these poisonous medicines must be thrown out of the home. To keep them is really dangerous.

Now a quite favorable time has come and we should think seriously. First of all we should eliminate nuclear and biological weapons. Eventually we must think seriously about the very concept of war and military establishments. A recent Chinese proposal to totally ban nuclear weapons is good; whether they really stick to it or not is another question. They carried out a nuclear test recently. That is awful.

During one of my interviews with German television, one written question put to me was that Westerners very much fear death and Easterners don't fear death. Why is it? Then told the interviewer that I believed the contrary. You Westerners love war, you love these horrible weapons. These weapons kill, and war means death, and it is natural death. This is awful and it seems you have no fear of death! We Tibetans, in our time, saw soldiers and the military as something negative. That means we have more fear of death!

So, I think our concept of building military establishments in the name of defense is wrong. I consider military establishments as the worst kind of human rights violation-but legalized. Then, at the same time, I think it is true that with five billion people there are bound to be some mischievous people. In future world community there will be also never be a 100 percent perfect society.

Therefore counter measures to that are also necessary. During the Gulf War crisis the main force came from America. Because of the world situation the system of collective forces has already happened.

In future a police or military force should be created by nations big or small, irrespectively, by equally balanced forces. These collective forces should be controlled by collective leadership on an international basis. Forces can be mobilized everywhere. If we achieve this then there will be no more violent conflict between nations, no more civil war. On the other hand, we save a lot of money and also we save a lot of destruction. So fear in the world atmosphere can be reduced to some extent.

Even if we take every precaution to preserve our planet, this is simply not possible because of the population. According to scientists, if the present rate of population growth continues, there is a real danger and the situation is increasing in seriousness every day.

As a Buddhist monk, of course, I consider every human life is something very precious, almost like a jewel. Therefore, from that viewpoint, to control human birth is not appropriate. This is the individual case. If we look at the whole then obviously, because of its high population, eventually this planet simply can't provide sufficient requirements for human beings. So this is not a question of one individual, or two human beings, but the suffering of all humanity-including other species. Therefore, and from a Buddhist viewpoint, it is absolutely worthwhile to think about, and seriously implement birth control.

*Transcript of the address to the **Parliamentary Earth Summit (Global Forum) of the United Nations Conference on the Environment and Development (UNCED)**, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, on June 6, 1992.*



13. Universal Responsibility and Our Global Environment

As the twentieth century draws to close, we find that the world has grown smaller. The world's peace have become almost one community. Political and military alliances have created large multinational groups, industry and international trade have produced a global economy. Worldwide communications are eliminating ancient barriers of distance, language and race. We are also being drawn together by the grave problems we face: overpopulation, dwindling natural resources, and an environmental crisis that threatens our air, water, and trees, along with the vast number of beautiful life forms that are the very foundation of existence on this small planet we share.

I believe that to meet the challenge of our times, human beings will have to develop a greater sense of universal responsibility. Each of us must learn to work not for his or her self, family or nation, but for the benefit of all mankind. Universal responsibility is the real key to human survival. It is the best foundation for world peace, the equitable use of natural resources and through concern for the future generations, the proper care of the environment.

I have come to this international gathering of environmental leaders in a spirit of optimism and hope. The meetings here represent a threshold for humanity; the chance for our emerging global community to cooperate in an unprecedented manner. Even though it appears that the Earth Summit may, in some respects, fall short of what is needed, the very fact that it has taken place represents a tremendous achievement. That is why it is so heartening to see so many non-governmental organizations here. Your role in forging a better future is absolutely essential, and while this role is still, within the United Nations, limited, it is expanding.

So many non-governmental organizations are built by dedicated volunteers out of genuine caring for the fellow human beings. Your commitment represents the forefront of both social and environmental progress. All of the organizations represented here

have particular wants and needs just, in fact, as individuals do. Without our collective efforts however, the gains made here would be significantly less.

Whether we like it or not, we have been born on this earth as part of one great family. Rich or poor, educated or uneducated belonging to one nation, ideology or another, ultimately each of us just a human being like everyone else. Furthermore, each of us has the same right to pursue happiness and avoid suffering. When you recognize that all beings are equal in this respect, you automatically feel empathy and closeness for them. Out of this, in turn, comes a genuine sense of universal responsibility; the wish to actively help others overcome their problems.

Of course, this sort of compassion is by nature, peaceful and gentle, but it is also very powerful. It is the true sign of inner strength. We do not need to become religious, nor do we need to believe in an ideology. All that is necessary is for each of us to develop our good human qualities.

The need for a sense of universal responsibility affects every aspect of modern life. Nowadays, significant events in one part of the world eventually affect the entire planet. Therefore, we have to treat each major local problem as a global concern from the moment it begins. We can no longer invoke the national, racial or ideological barriers that separate us without destructive repercussions. In the context of our new interdependence, considering the interests of others is clearly the best form of self-interest.

Interdependence, of course, is a fundamental law of nature. Not only myriad forms of life, but the subtlest level of material phenomena, as well, is governed by interdependence. All phenomena, from the planet we inhabit to the oceans, clouds, forests and flowers that surrounds us, arise in dependence upon subtle patterns of energy. Without their proper interaction, they dissolve and decay.

We need to appreciate this fact of nature far more than we have in the past. Our ignorance of it is directly responsible for many of the

problems we face. For instance, tapping the limited resources of our world—particularly those of the developing nations—simply to fuel consumerism, is disastrous. If it continues unchecked, eventually we will all suffer. We must respect the delicate matrix of life and allow it to replenish itself. The United Nations Environment Program warns, I'm told, that we are facing the most massive wave of extinction in 65 million years. This fact is profoundly frightening. It must open our minds to the immense proportions of the crisis we face.

Ignorance of Interdependence has not only harmed the natural environment, but human society as well.

Instead of caring for one another, we place most of our efforts for happiness in pursuing individual material consumption. We have become so engrossed in this pursuit that, without knowing it, we have neglected to foster the most basic human needs of love, kindness and cooperation. This is very sad. We have to consider what we human beings really are. We are not machine-made objects. If we were merely mechanical entities, then machines themselves could alleviate all of our sufferings and fulfill our needs. However, since we are not solely material creatures, it is a mistake to seek fulfillment in external development alone.

Basically, we all cherish tranquility. For example, when spring comes, the days grow longer, there is more sunshine, the grass and trees come alive and everything is fresh. People feel happy. In autumn, one leaf falls, then another, then all the beautiful flowers die until we are surrounded by bare naked plants. We do not feel so joyful. Why is this? Because deep down, we desire constructive, fruitful growth and dislike things collapsing, dying or being destroyed. Every destructive action goes against our basic nature; building, being constructive, is the human way.

To pursue growth properly, we need to renew our commitment to human values in many fields. Political life, of course, requires an ethical foundation, but science and religion, as well, should be pursued from a moral basis. Without it scientists cannot distinguish between beneficial technologies and those which are merely

expedient. The environmental damage surrounding us is the most obvious result of this confusion. In the case of religion, it is particularly necessary.

The purpose of religion is not to build beautiful churches or temples, but to cultivate positive human qualities such as tolerance, generosity and love. Every world religion, no matter what its philosophical view, is founded first and foremost on the precept that we must reduce our selfishness and serves others. Unfortunately, sometimes in the name of religion, people cause more quarrels than they solve. Practitioners of different faiths should realize that each religious tradition has immense intrinsic value as a means for providing mental and spiritual health.

There is a wonderful verse in the Bible about turning swords into ploughshares. It's a lovely image, a weapon transformed into a tool to serve basic human needs, symbolic of an attitude of inner and outer disarmament. In the spirit of this ancient message, I think it is important that we stress today the urgency of a policy that is long overdue; the demilitarization of the entire planet.

Demilitarization will free great human resources for protection of the environment, relief of poverty, and sustainable human development. It is my hope that the United Nations can soon help make this a reality.

I have always envisioned the future of my own country, Tibet, to be founded on this basis. Tibet would be a neutral, demilitarized sanctuary where weapons are forbidden and the people live in harmony with nature. This is not merely a dream – it is precisely the way Tibetans tried to live for over a thousand years before our country was tragically invaded. In Tibet, wildlife was protected in accordance with Buddhist principles. In the seventeenth century, we began enacting decrees to protect the environment and so we may have been one of the first nations to have difficulty enforcing environmental regulations! However, mainly our environment was protected by our beliefs, which were instilled in us as children. Also, for at least the last three hundred years, we had virtually no

army. Tibet gave up the waging as an instrument of national policy in the eighth century.

I would like to conclude by stating that, in general, I feel optimistic about the future. The rapid changes in our attitude towards the earth are also a source of hope. As recently as a decade ago, we thoughtlessly devoured the resources of the world, as if there were no end to them. We failed to realize that unchecked consumerism was disastrous for both the environment and social welfare. Now, both individuals and governments are seeking a new ecological and economic order.

I often joke that the moon and stars look beautiful, but if any of us tried to live on them we would be miserable. This blue planet of ours is a delightful habitat. Its life is our life; its future our future. Indeed, the earth acts like a mother to us all. Like children, we are dependent on her. In the fact of such global problems as the greenhouse effect and depletion of the ozone layer, individual organizations and single nations are helpless. Unless we all work together, no solution can be found. Our mother earth is teaching us a lesson in universal responsibility.

I think we say that, because of the lessons we have begun to learn, the next century will be friendlier, more harmonious, and less harmful. Compassion, the seeds of peace will be able to flourish. I am very hopeful. At the same time, I believe that every individual has a responsibility to help guide our global family in the right direction. Good wishes alone are not enough; we have to assume responsibility. Large human movements spring from individual human initiatives.

The sponsor of these events, the United Nations, was founded out of the need to prevent military conflict. I am very moved that its mission has grown to take on a new challenge – that of safeguarding the long-term health of our planet and ourselves. I hope and pray that in the days ahead, each of us does all we can to see that the goal of creating a happier, more harmonious and healthier world is achieved.

*The full text of the address to the **Parliamentary Earth Summit (Global Forum) of the United Nations Conference on the Environment and Development (UNCED)**, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, on June 7, 1992.*

14. An Essay on Mountains

In Tibet, mountains are often considered the abodes of deities. For example, Amnye Machen, a mountain in northeastern Tibet, is regarded as the home of Machen Pomra, one of the most important deities of Amdo, my home province. Because all the people of Amdo consider Machen Pomra their special friend, many of them go round the foot of the mountain on pilgrimage.

Tibetans generally have shown little interest in scaling the peaks that surround them, perhaps out of deference to the presiding deities. However, I think there is a more practical reason. Most Tibetans have to climb far too many mountain passes to have any wish to climb higher than they must. When the people of Lhasa sometimes climbed for pleasure, they chose hills of a reasonable size and on reaching the top would burn incense, say prayers and then relax with a picnic.

Travelers in Tibet traditionally add a stone to the cairns at the tops of hills or passes with a shout of “Lha-gyal-lo- Victory to the gods”. Later ‘Mani stones’, stones carved with prayers and other scriptures may be added along with prayer flags. One practical outcome of this traditional sense for the environment is a deep-seated concern to protect it.

Only hermits, wild animals, and, in the summer, nomads and their herds actually live high amongst them, but in the simplicity and quiet of our mountains, there is more peace of mind than in most cities of the world. Since the practice of Buddhism involves seeing phenomena as empty of inherent existence, it is helpful for a meditator to be able to look into the vast, empty space seen from a mountain- top.

In these stores of natural treasure our doctors found many of the precious herbs and plants from which they compounded their medicines, while nomads found rich pasture for their animals, so crucial to the Tibetan economy. But of even wider-ranging impact,

the Land of Snow's mountains are the source of many of Asia's great rivers. The recent massive floods on the Indian sub-continent and in China can be attributed, in part, to the massive deforestation and environmental destruction that has followed China's violent occupation of Tibet.

For over 1,000 years we Tibetans have adhered to spiritual and environmental values in order to maintain the delicate balance of life across the high plateau on which we live. Inspired by the Buddha's message of non-violence and compassion and protected by our mountains, we have sought to respect every form of life, while our neighbors lived undisturbed.

These days when we talk about preservation of the environment, whether we mean the wildlife, forests, oceans, rivers or mountains, ultimately the decision to act must come from our hearts. So, the key point, I think, is for all of us to develop a genuine sense of universal responsibility, not only towards this beautiful blue planet that is our home, but also towards the innumerable sentient beings with whom we share it.

A Newsweek article from July 16, 1992 .



16. The Sheltering Tree of Interdependence: A Buddhist Monk's Reflections on Ecological Responsibility

During the course of my extensive travelling to countries across the world, rich and poor, East and West, I have seen people reveling in pleasure, and people suffering. The advancement of science and technology seems to have achieved little more than linear, numerical improvement; development often means little more than more mansions in more cities. As a result, the ecological balance- the very basis of our life on earth- has been greatly affected.

On the other hand, in days gone by, the people of Tibet lived a happy life, untroubled by pollution, in natural conditions. Today, all over the world, including Tibet, ecological degradation is fast overtaking us. I am wholly convinced that, if all of us do not make a concerted effort, with a sense of universal responsibility, we will see the gradual breakdown of the fragile ecosystems that support us, resulting in an irreversible and irrevocable degradation of our planet, Earth.

These stanzas have been composed to underline my deep concern, and to call upon all concerned people to make continuous efforts to reserve and remedy the degradation of our environment.

- 1 O Lord Tathagata
Born of the Iksvakus tree
Peerless One
Who, seeing the all-pervasive nature
Of interdependence
Between the Environment and sentient beings
Samsara and Nirvana
Moving and unmoving
Teaches the world out of compassion
Bestow thy benevolence on us

- 2 O the Savior
The one called Avalokitesvara
Personifying the body of compassion
Of all Buddhas
We beseech thee to make our spirits ripen
And fructify to observe reality
Bereft of illusion
- 3 Our obdurate egocentricity
Ingrained in our minds
Since beginningless time
Contaminates, defiles and pollutes
The environment
Created by the common karma
Of all sentient beings
- 4 Lakes and ponds have lost
Their clarity, their coolness
The atmosphere is poisoned
Nature's celestial canopy in the fiery firmament
Has burst asunder
And sentient beings suffer diseases
Unknown before
- 5 Perennial snow mountains resplendent in their glory
Bow down and melt into water
The majestic oceans lose their ageless equilibrium
And inundate islands
- 6 The dangers of fire, water and wind are limitless
Sweltering heat dries up our lush forests
Lashing our world with unprecedented storms
And the oceans surrender their salt to the elements
- 7 Though people lack not wealth
They cannot afford to breathe clean air
Rains and streams cleanse not
But remain inert and powerless liquids

- 8 Human beings
And countless beings
That inhabit water and land
Reel under the yoke of physical pain
Caused by malevolent diseases
Their minds are dulled
With sloth, stupor and ignorance
The joys of the body and spirit
Are far, far away
- 9 We needlessly pollute
The fair bosom of our mother earth
Rip out her trees to feed our short-sighted greed
Turning our fertile earth into a sterile desert
- 10 The interdependent nature
Of the external environment
And people's inward nature
Described in tantras
Works on Medicine, and astronomy
Has verily been vindicated
By our present experience
- 11 The earth is home to living beings;
Equal and impartial to the moving and unmoving
Thus spoke the Buddha in truthful voice
With the great earth for witness
- 12 As a noble being recognizes the kindness
Of a sentient mother
And makes recompense for it
So the earth, the universal mother
Which nurtures equally
Should be regarded with affection and care
- 13 Forsake wastage
Pollution not the clean, clear nature
Of the four elements
And destroy the well being of people

- But absorb yourself in actions
That are beneficial to all
- 14 Under a tree was the great Saga Buddha born
Under a tree, he overcame passion
And attained enlightenment
Under two trees did he pass in Nirvana
Verily, the Buddha held the tree in great esteem
- 15 Here, where Manjusri's emanation
Lama Tson Khapa's body bloomed forth
Is marked by a sandal tree
Bearing a hundred thousand images of the Buddha
- 16 Is it not well known
That some transcendental deities
Eminent local deities and spirits
Make their abode in tree?
- 17 Flourishing trees clean the wind
Help us breathe the sustaining air of life
They please the eye and sooth the mind
Their shade makes a welcome resting-place
- 18 In Vinaya, the Buddha taught monks
To care for tender trees
From this, we learn the virtue
Of planting, of nurturing trees
- 19 The Buddha forbade monks to cut
Cause others to cut living plants
Destroy seeds or defile the fresh green grass
Should this not inspire us
To love and protect our environment?
- 20 They say, in the celestial realms
The trees emanate
The Buddha's blessings
And echo the sound

- Of basic Buddhist doctrines
Like impermanence
- 21 It is tree that brings rain
Trees that hold the essence of the soil
Kalpa-Taru, the tree of wishes fulfillment
Virtually resides on earth
To serve all purposes
- 22 In times of yore
Our forbears ate the fruits of trees
Wore their leaves
Discovered fire by the attrition of wood
Took refuge amidst the foliage of trees
When they encountered danger
- 23 Even in this age of science
Of technology
Trees provide us shelter
The chairs we sit in
The beds we lie on
When the heart is ablaze
With the fire of anger
Fueled by wrangling
Trees bring refreshing, welcome coolness
- 24 In the trees lie the roots
Of all life on earth
When it vanishes
The land exemplified by the name
Of the Jambu tree
Will remain no more than a dreary, desolate desert
- 25 Nothing is dearer to the living than life
Recognizing this, in the Vinaya rules
The Buddha lays down prohibitions
Like the use of water with living creatures
- 26 In the remoteness of the Himalayas
In the days of yore, the land of Tibet

- Observed a ban on hunting, on fishing
And, during designated periods, even construction
These traditions are noble
For they preserve and cherish
The lives of humble, helpless, defenseless creatures
- 27 Playing with the lives of other beings
Without sensitivity or hesitation
As in the act of hunting or fishing for sport
Is an act of heedless, needless violence
A violation of the solemn rights
Of all living beings
- 28 Being attentive to the nature
Of interdependence of all creatures
Both animate and inanimate
One should never slacken in one's efforts
To preserve and conserve nature's energy
- 29 On a certain day, month and year
One should observe the ceremony
Of tree planting
Thus, one fulfills one's responsibilities
Serves one's fellow beings
Which not only brings one happiness
But benefits all
- 30 May the force of observing that which is right
And abstinence from wrong practices and evil deeds
Nourish and augment the prosperity of the world
May it invigorate living beings and help them blossom
May sylvan joy and pristine happiness
Ever increase, ever spread and encompass all that is

*This poem was released on the occasion of the presentation of a statue of the Buddha to the people of India by His Holiness the Dalai Lama , and to mark the opening of the **International Conference on Ecological Responsibility: A Dialogue With Buddhism** at New Delhi on October 2, 1993. (A booklet of the poem, in Tibetan and English, is distributed by Tibet House, New Delhi.)*

17. Environment Awareness: A Part of Daily Life

This conference on ecology is extremely appropriate. I recognize the urgency of preserving the balance of the environment, and believe that if we neglect it, the world as a whole will suffer.

Because of the material wealth and resulting environmental problems seen in the West, some people say we need to discard the modern way of life. But I feel this is a bit extreme. We must use wisdom and understanding to tackle this ecological problem. I am very happy there are so many experts from different fields to inform the discussions of these issues.

I feel that it is extremely important that each individual realize their responsibility for preserving the environment, to make it a part of daily life, create the same attitude in their families, and spread it to the community.

Because we in the Third World face so much poverty, we sometimes see the environmental issues as far away from us. But we must learn from the problems that are faced by the highly advanced nations to set the proper path from the beginning.

I look forward to the new ideas from this conference and hope it will bring about much benefit.

*Quoted from His Holiness the Dalai Lama's address at the Consecration of the Statue of Lord Buddha and the **International Conference on Ecological Responsibility—a Dialogue with Buddhism**, Interim Report, 1993: Tibet House, New Delhi.*

18. Practical Steps Towards Protection of the Environment

These days the environment- the source of life for all beings in the world including Tibet, the Land of Snows- is undergoing extensive degeneration. At this time it is extremely important that every human being, according to his or her ability, consistently puts effort into ensuring the conservation and protection of this planet's environment and its inhabitants.

The benefits of an undefiled environment are many; for instance, a healthy tree purifies the air and supplies oxygen for living beings to breathe. It harmonizes the elements and increases life expectancy. Its shade provides a refreshing place to rest. It brings rain at the right time. It nourishes crops and livestock, and balances the temperature. It contributes to an attractive landscape and continually replenishes its surroundings. It brings about natural development in the spheres of education, economics and so forth.

The drawbacks of a polluted environment include a decline in the pure, cool qualities of the oceans and lakes, so that the creatures dwelling in those places are disturbed. The loss of vegetation and forests causes degeneration in the earth's nourishment.

Rain does not fall when it is needed. Unprecedented fierce storms rage, and so on. So there are many disadvantages.

From the Dharma point of view our teacher, the king of Shakya, was also born at the foot of a tree. He attained enlightenment under a tree, and finally passed away under a tree. Particularly in the Vinaya of the holy Dharma, fully ordained monks are taught how to nurture trees and so on. From that we can understand that planting and nurturing trees are virtuous acts. Moreover, the wisdom deities of the non-mundane worlds, as well as various local devas, nagas and spirits, inhabit trees. That also leads us to understand that trees are by nature extremely important.

It is generally beneficial to plant various types of trees, as mentioned above. In particular, fruit trees provide a living and nourishment predominantly for humans, as well as benefit to many other sentient creatures. They help to improve health and increase appetite, and so forth. So it certainly is important to plant trees.

Likewise, planting flowers also is a pure virtuous act. For example, when making a mandala offering we pray that the ground may be covered with incense and strewn with flowers. Flowers assist us in accumulating merit and purifying obscurations, and also is an indispensable offering item everywhere in performing religious activities, such as the visualization of meditational deities. Moreover, if there are colorful flowers and then you offer them through visualization to the Triple Gem, the benefit of a swift accumulation of merit occurs. What is more, when people who are experiencing stress and an imbalance mind stroll for a while in a garden, their minds are benefited by becoming refreshed and filled with pleasure.

Therefore, the whole of society needs to take an interest in planting various kinds of trees and flowers around monasteries, schools, offices, hospitals, factories, restaurants, hotels and residences, on both sides of thoroughfares. In order to protect the growth of whatever has been planted in the best way, people should advise their children not to harm them. This definitely is a beneficial service to oneself and others and, in fact, to all living beings.

In Tibet previously there was a good tradition of instituting laws to safeguard hills and valleys for unprotected and unsupported wild animals and birds and for the protection of various defenseless creatures. We should maintain the continuity of this tradition. At the present time a few thoughts less people hunt wild animals and catch fish and seals, through their craving for money and material goods. It is noble work for self and others, and for present and future lives, to stop all of this from happening.

Similarly, it is inappropriate randomly to discard fruit-peel, paper, plastic bottles, old cloths, food leftovers and other kinds of garbage. Nor should people urinate and defecate every where. Such things

spoil the beauty of the landscape and are a hazard to health and hygiene. There are some people, especially, who tie their worn cloths and fallen hair to the branches of trees. This looks extremely unattractive, so from now on this habit should be abandoned.

In short, this is a request that, through understanding the interdependent nature of the world and its inhabitants, people will implement practices based upon unmistakably accepting the correct means to cherish the potential of the vast natural realm.

May the attractive and healthy forests be increased in all the one hundred directions! May sentient creatures be freed from untimely death and live happy lives!

*This message was delivered on **Tibetan Democracy Day**, September 2, 1994.*



19. Hope for Tibet's Environment

I am very happy and feel especially honored to be speaking to a group of people who are really dedicated to environmental problems in general and the Tibetan environmental problems in particular. I express my deep appreciation to Senator Bob Brown.

Now, environmental problems are something new to me. When we were in Tibet, we always considered the environment pure. For Tibetans, whenever we saw a stream of water in Tibet, there was no question as to whether it was safe for drinking or not. However, it was different when we reached India and other places. For example, Switzerland is a very beautiful and impressive country, yet people say "Don't drink the water from this stream, it is polluted!"

Gradually, we Tibetans gained the knowledge and awareness that certain things are polluted and cannot be utilized. Actually, in India, when our settlements started in some places, large number of Tibetans fell ill with stomach problems as a result of drinking polluted water. So through our own experience and by meeting scientists we have become better educated about environmental issues.

When we look back at our own country, Tibet, it is a big country with a vast land area, with high altitude and a cold and dry climate. Perhaps these things provided some kind of natural protection to Tibet's environment—keeping it clean and fresh. In the Northern pastures, the rocky areas, the forested areas and the river valleys there used to be lots of wild animals, fish and birds. As a Buddhist country there were certain traditional laws in Tibet concerned with a complete ban on fishing and hunting.

I remember in Lhasa when I was young, some Nepalese did a little hunting and fishing because they were not very much concerned with Tibetan laws. Otherwise there was a real safety for animals at that time.

There is a strange story. Chinese farmers and road builders who came to Tibet after 1959 were very fond of meat. They usually went hunting birds, such as ducks, wearing Chinese army uniform or Chinese clothes. These clothes startled the birds and made them immediately fly away. Eventually these hunters were forced to wear Tibetan dress. This is a true story! Such things happened, especially during the 1970's and 80's, when there were still large numbers of birds.

Recently, a few thousand Tibetans from India went to their native places in Tibet. When they returned, they all told the same story. They said that about forty or fifty years ago there were huge forest covers in their native areas. Now all these richly forested mountains have become bald like a monk's head. No more tall trees. In some cases the roots of the trees are even uprooted and taken away! This is the present situation. In the past, there were big herds of animals to be seen in Tibet, but few remain today. Therefore much has changed.

The large-scale deforestation in Tibet is a matter of great sadness. It is not only sad for the local area, which has lost its beauty, but for the local people, who now find it hard to collect even enough fuelwood. Relatively, these are small problems; looking from a wider perspective, deforestation has other extensive negative consequences. Firstly, many parts of Tibet are high and dry. This means that it takes longer for the land to recover compared to lower regions with humid climate, and the negative effects therefore last much longer.

Secondly, many of the rivers which flow through large areas of Asia, through Pakistan, India, China, Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia, rivers such as the Yellow river, Brahmaputra, Yangtse, Salween and Mekong, all originate in Tibet. It is at the places of origin of these rivers that large-scale deforestation and mining are taking place. The pollution of these rivers has a drastic effect on the down-stream countries.

According to Chinese statistics there are 126 different minerals in Tibet. When these resources were discovered by the Chinese, they were extensively mined without proper environmental safeguards, resulting in devastation of the environment. As a result,

deforestation and mining are causing more floods in the lowlands of Tibet.

The deforestation of the Tibetan plateau, according to experts, will change the amount of reflection from snow into space (forested areas absorb more solar radiation) and this affects the monsoon of the next year, not only in Tibet, but in all surrounding areas. Therefore, it becomes even more important to conserve Tibet's environment.

I think the climate change in Tibet will not affect Australia immediately. So your concern for Tibet is a genuine altruistic one. Concern from China and India may not be genuine, as it directly relates to their own future.

The Tibetan environment is very delicate and it is very important. Unfortunately, as you know, in the Communist world, in countries such as the former Soviet Union, Poland and the former East Germany, there were many pollution problems in the past resulting from carelessness, simply because factories are growing bigger and production is rising with little regard to the damage this growth causes to the environment. The situation is the same in the People's Republic of China. In the 1970's and 1980's there was no awareness of pollution, although now I think some awareness is developing. So I think the situation was initially to do with ignorance.

According to some information, it seems that during the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976) temples in China proper suffered less destruction than in other areas. This may not be due to government policy, but rather may be the result of discrimination by local officials. So it seems that Chinese officials have neglected the environment in the places where ethnic groups are living.

Another story comes from the Dingri region of southern Tibet. Five years ago a local Tibetan told me about a river that all the villagers used for drinking. There were also Chinese living in the area. The Chinese residents belonging to the People's Liberation Army (PLA), were informed not to drink the water from the river, but local Tibetans were not informed. Tibetans still drink the

polluted water. This shows that some form of negligence is going on, and obviously is not because of lack of awareness, but due to other reasons. In this light, any concern from other human brothers and sisters for our unfortunate situation, unfortunate people and their environment is very gratefully received and very important.

Then talking about the environment more generally, it comes to mind that one key factor in the future is human population. Look at India and China, there are so many people. The standard of living is very low. It is very difficult to explain or educate the masses about the environment when their most pressing concern is survival.

For example, in our second home in the Kangra Valley, (Himachal Pradesh, India), the local Indian villager's survival depends on cutting wood and slate mining. On the eastern side of Dharamsala we have large-scale slate quarries. Some of my Indian friends told me that I should speak-out about the huge environmental damage that these quarries cause, but it is very difficult. For at least a few hundred families livelihood depend solely on these activities. Unless we show them new ways of earning their livelihood, it is very difficult to stop them. Therefore, the population explosion is ultimately a very serious matter. So family planning is crucial, especially in the developing world.

Then there are industries such as the meat industries, where killing of animals takes place on a large-scale. This is not only cruel, but it has very negative effects on the environment. There are industries which produce constructive machineries. There may be some justification for their existence. But those which produce destructive things such as war machines, do great damage.

Some companies and governments actually make profit from these activities, but the nature of their production is a destructive one. For example, a bullet is designed to kill a person, not as a decoration piece! All these war machines look very beautiful. When I was small, these machines seemed beautiful to me, even small toys like tanks and machine guns seemed very beautiful, very smart, don't you think? The whole military establishment: their uniforms, their discipline, everything seems very striking and very impressive, but the very

purpose of this organization is to kill. So we must think of these matters if we are to be truly concerned about the environment, not only for this generation, but for future generations as well.

I think all these things are inter-related. As I mentioned earlier, family planning should be encouraged. From a Buddhist perspective it is quite simple. Each human life is very precious. From this perspective it is better to avoid or control birth, but today there are 1.5 billion precious lives—too many precious lives! As a result it is not only one or two precious human lives that are at stake, but the question is of the survival of humanity at large. So therefore the conclusion we arrive at is that we must take family planning very seriously, if we are to save the prosperity of the entire humanity, preferably through non-violent means, not through abortion or killing, but by some other means. I often half jokingly say... more monks and nuns. That is the most non-violent and effective method. So if you can't become a monk or a nun, then practice other non-violent methods of birth control.

Then there is the question of how to reduce military establishments. The groundwork we must do is to promote non-violence. But this is not enough because we have so many conflicts in this world. So long as humanity remains, so will conflict.

One way of promoting non-violence against warfare and the production of weapons is to promote ideas of dialogue and compromise, and the spirit of reconciliation. I think we must promote these ideas at the family and community level. It is much more practical to solve problems through dialogue rather than through confrontation.

So the concept of dialogue must begin at the family level. As individuals we must look within, investigate, analyze and then try to overcome contradictory ideas. We must not lose hope or despair of the irritating conflict we find inside ourselves. So these are some of the ways in which we can ultimately solve environmental problems.

Finally, I want to tell you that self-confidence and enthusiasm are the key to a successful life, and to succeed in any activity one is

engaged in. We must be determined and must have an optimistic outlook, then even if we fail we will have no regrets. On the other hand, lack of determination and effort will cause double regret. Firstly because the objectives were not realized, and secondly because you feel guilty and regret at not having made full effort in the realization of the objectives.

So therefore, whether we commit ourselves or not it is an individual choice. Once you have made up your mind, you must go forward with a single-minded devotion in spite of the obstacles. This is very important.

Finally I would like to express my deep appreciation to all participants and those who organized this conference. I very much appreciate it. I would also like to express my deep appreciation on behalf of the six million Tibetan people whose lives are very much in danger due to pollution. Some children are already suffering from illness because of air pollution. There is tremendous anxiety and suffering, and their voices may not be heard widely. They simply express their grievances within the confines of their small homes. I would like to express my deep appreciation on behalf of all these innocent people.

Thank you!

His Holiness the Dalai Lama's speech at the "Endangered Tibet" Conference in Sydney, Australia, on September 28, 1996.



20. Politics and Environment: An Interview

Dalai Lama: In general, I feel that laws should serve as guidelines for the proper use of human initiative, creativity and ability.

Fabien: Do you think that democracy is helping laws to evolve in this way?

Dalai Lama: Yes, in democratic countries, legal systems should work that way and generally do. But these laws nevertheless partially contradict the Buddhist principle of interdependence, since they do not include “democratic rights” for the environment and the animal realm. Most legal systems refer only to human rights and do not consider the rights of animals or other beings that share the planet with us. Laws that protect human rights and values and indicate proper ways to use human ability are not in contradiction with karma or causality – not in the Western sense where the same causes have the same effect, but in the Buddhist sense where each effect proceeds from a cause that also needs to be considered.

In reality, the problem is that for most “powerful” people there is a difference between the principle of the law and its application. Almost all legal systems condemn killing. This notion occurs in most countries of the world. Yet in practice, powerful people treat killing as they treat lying. For politicians, small lies are prohibited, but large lies are accepted. For a Buddhist, this is a very obvious contradiction. The same applies to killing. When a man who is desperate kills another person, this small act is defined as murder. It is wrong. But the man who kills or gives orders to kill thousands of people is a hero! That is very unfortunate.

Most religious systems condemn murder, rape, and theft. In my opinion, religious principles are based on natural human attitudes and feelings. Their essential function is to inspire human beings to develop basic human qualities. Thus it seems logical that most laws would be consistent with the principles of positive karma. But in order for both religious and secular laws to conform to the principles of interdependence, we need to widen their perspective

to include protection of the environment and the animal realm. This is how we can apply the Buddhist view of interdependence to a broader vision of law and order.

Dalai Lama: [...] In any case, all the natural resource specialists with whom I have spoken warn me that this gap between the “haves” and “have-nots” should be reduced. At present there are around 5.5 billion human beings on earth. If the living standard of the southerners were raised to the level the northerners are presently enjoying, what would happen to the world’s natural resources? This situation would not be sustainable. China, for example, has a population of 1.2 billion. If each family were to have two cars, the environmental damage would be unimaginable. Nine hundred million people live in India.

The Western concept of increasing the GNP each year must change, and fast. The principle itself contradicts all natural and logical laws.

Fabien: Do you think Westerners should also have fewer cars?

Dalai Lama: Certainly. They need to develop a sense of contentment and more consideration towards others. Things should be done in a more just, equal manner. In the meantime, the birth control question must also be addressed. The southern countries must curb their population growth.

Fabien: Efficient birth control mainly depends on standard of living. The more access to education women have, the fewer children they produce, statistically speaking. So, education seems to be the best way to curb the population explosion.

Dalai Lama: That’s very good. But what education? To tell you the truth, I think the first thing the southerners must do is recognize the negative consequences of the present Western concepts of life and economy. We have to correct or remould this erroneous belief in the value of an ever-increasing GNP.

Likewise, although some factories and industries are now adopting new ways to protect the environment, the northerners are inflicting a lot of damage on the world’s environment. This prompts me to

say that from a global point of view the money produced by the northern world is still insufficient.

[...] In the early part of this century, everyone foolishly thought that nature's resources were limitless and at the disposal of humanity. Today ecological ideology even influences political parties. All these changes stem from the experience we have acquired as human beings. In the same way, the concept of human rights, whether individual or general, such as the right to self-determination for a given group, has evolved. These ideas are now universally recognized. Such progress gives me hope for the future.

Fabien: Do you think that one individual can change the world?

Dalai Lama: Yes.

Fabien: In that case, the best thing to do is to start trying to improve oneself.

Dalai Lama: It seems quite simple. First, it is important to realize we are part of nature. Ultimately, nature will always be more powerful than human beings, even with all their nuclear weapons, scientific equipment, and knowledge. If the sun disappears or the earth's temperature changes by a few degrees, then we are really in trouble.

At a deeper level, we should recognize that although we are part of nature, we can control and change things, to some extent, due to our intelligence. Among the thousands of species of mammals on earth, we humans have the greatest capacity to alter nature. As such, we have a twofold responsibility. Morally, as beings of higher intelligence, we must care for this world. The other inhabitants of the planet—insects and so on—do not have the means to save or protect this world. Our other responsibility is to undo the serious environmental degradation that is the result of incorrect human behaviour. We have recklessly polluted the world with chemicals and nuclear waste, selfishly consuming many of its resources. Humanity must take the initiative to repair and protect the world.

Of course, when we say, “humanity” or “society”, it's obvious the initiative must come from individuals. It is wrong to expect our governments, or even God, to give us any guidance on these matters.

[...] Actually, I'm quite optimistic. Take the example of environmental problems. The scientists and associations that defend the environment have repeatedly informed us about the ecological problems now facing the earth, like global warming and widespread pollution of our water and air. Now, awareness is growing worldwide. New techniques are evolving so that we can avoid pollution without changing the process of industry or the economy. During a recent visit to Stockholm, my friends told me that ten years before the fish had practically disappeared from the nearby river. Now they are regenerating, simply because the industrial plants along that river have made some effort to protect the environment. In other words, they managed to improve the situation without destroying the industry. I was recently in the Rohr region of Germany, a centre of industry. One large company showed me a film on the different means they were taking to reduce pollution and recycle waste material. Without changing their entire structure, they were causing much less damage to the environment.

Concern for ecology grows with the proper and widespread dissemination of information. People have gradually become convinced that the situation is serious and that we must take care for our planet. I've noticed that now, in some hotels, we are asked to not waste electricity or water. This is a good start. Likewise, the media must speak of the importance of altruism in every human activity. It must be discussed again and again, in newspapers, in the movies, on the radio, on TV. I think there is plenty of momentum to do this. Medical and scientific fields should support the theory of altruism. Ecologists will support it, as the peace movement, providing the educational systems are also improved so that children become less violent. Then, even the police force will change, and everyone will gradually begin to think and act with more kindness, altruism, and compassion.

*Excerpts from **Imagine All the People: A conversation with the Dalai Lama on Money, Politics and Life as it Could Be**, Wisdom Publications, Boston, 1999.*

21. The Natural World

If there is one area in which both education and the media have a special responsibility, it is, I believe, our natural environment. This responsibility has less to do with questions of right or wrong than with the question of survival. The natural world is our home. It is not necessarily sacred or holy. It is simply where we live. It is therefore in our interest to look after it. This is common sense. But only recently have the size of our population and the power of science and technology grown to the point that they have a direct impact on nature. To put it another way, until now, Mother Earth has been able to tolerate our sloppy house habits. However, the stage has now been reached where she can no longer accept our behaviour in silence. The problems caused by environmental disasters can be seen as her response to our irresponsible behaviour. She is warning us that there are limits even to her tolerance.

Nowhere are the consequences of our failure to exercise discipline in the way we relate to our environment more apparent than in the case of present-day Tibet. It is no exaggeration to say that the Tibet I grew up in was a wildlife paradise. Every traveller who visited Tibet before the middle of the twentieth century remarked on this.

Animals were rarely hunted, except in the remotest areas where crops could not be grown. Indeed, it was customary for government officials annually to issue a proclamation protecting wildlife: Nobody, it read, however humble or noble, shall harm or do violence to the creatures of the waters or the wild. The only exceptions to this were rats and wolves.

As a young man, I recall seeing great numbers of different species whenever I travelled outside Lhasa. My chief memory of the three-month journey across Tibet from my birthplace at Takster in the East to Lhasa, where I was formally proclaimed Dalai Lama as a four-year-old boy, is of the wildlife we encountered along the way. Immense herds of kiang (wild asses) and drong (wild yak) freely

roamed the great plains. Occasionally we would catch sight of shimmering herds of *gowa*, the shy Tibetan gazelle, of *shawa-chukar*, the white-lipped deer, or of *tsoe*, our majestic antelope. I remember, too, my fascination for the little chibi, or pika, which would congregate on grassy areas. They were so friendly. I loved to watch the birds: the dignified gho (the bearded eagle) soaring high above monasteries and perched up in the mountains; the flocks of geese (nangbar); and occasionally, at night, to hear the call of the wookpa (the long-eared owl).

Even in Lhasa, one did not feel in any way cut off from the natural world. In my rooms at the top of the Potala, the winter palace of the Dalai Lamas, I spent countless hours as a child studying the behaviour of the red-beaked khyungkar which nested in the crevices of its walls. And behind the Norbulingka, the summer palace, I often saw pairs of *trung trung* (Japanese blacknecked cranes), birds which for me are the epitome of elegance and grace, that lived in the marshlands there. And all this is not to mention the crowning glory of Tibetan fauna: the bears and mountain foxes, the *chanku* (wolves), and *sazik* (the beautiful snow leopard), and the *sik* (lynx) which struck terror into the hearts of the normal farmer – or the gentle-faced giant panda (*thom tra*), which is native to the border area between Tibet and China.

Sadly, this profusion of wildlife is no longer to be found. Partly due to hunting but primarily due to loss of habitat, what remains half a century after Tibet was occupied is only a small fraction of what there was. Without exception, every Tibetan I have spoken with who has been back to visit Tibet after thirty to forty years has reported on a striking absence of wildlife. Whereas before wild animals would often come close to the house, today they are hardly anywhere to be seen.

Equally troubling is the devastation of Tibet's forests. In the past, the hills were all thickly wooded; today those who have been back report that they are clean-shaven like a monk's head. The government in Beijing has admitted that the tragic flooding of western China, and further afield, is in part due to this. And yet I hear continuous

reports of round-the-clock convoys of trucks carrying logs east out of Tibet. This is especially tragic given the country's mountainous terrain and harsh climate. It means that replanting requires sustained care and attention. Unfortunately there is little evidence of this.

None of this is to say that, historically, we Tibetans were deliberately 'conservationist'. We were not. The idea of something called 'pollution' simply never occurred to us. There is no denying we were rather spoiled in this respect. A small population inhabited a very large area with clean, dry air and an abundance of pure mountain water. This innocent attitude toward cleanliness meant that when we Tibetans went into exile, we were astonished to discover, for example, the existence of streams whose water is not drinkable. Like an only child, no matter what we did, Mother Earth tolerated our behaviour. The result was that we had no proper understanding of cleanliness and hygiene. People would spit or blow their nose in the street without giving it a second thought. Indeed, saying this, I recall one elderly Khampa, a former bodyguard who used to come each day to circumambulate my residence in Dharamsala (a popular devotion). Unfortunately, he suffered greatly from bronchitis. This was exacerbated by the incense he carried. At each corner, therefore, he would pause to cough and expectorate so ferociously that I sometimes wondered whether he had come to pray or just to spit!

Over the years, since our first arriving in exile, I have taken a close interest in environmental issues. The Tibetan government in exile has paid particular attention to introducing our children to their responsibilities as residents of this fragile planet. And I never hesitate to speak out on the subject whenever I am given the opportunity. In particular, I always stress the need to consider how our actions, in affecting the environment, are likely to affect others. I admit that this is very often difficult to judge. We cannot say for sure what the ultimate effects of, for example, deforestation might be on the soil and the local rainfall, let alone what the implications are for the planet's weather systems. The only clear thing is that we humans are the only species with the power to destroy the

earth as we know it. The birds have no such power, nor do the insects, nor does any mammal. Yet if we have the capacity to destroy the earth, so, too, do we have the capacity to protect it.

What is essential is that we find methods of manufacture that do not destroy nature. We need to find ways of cutting down on our use of wood and other limited natural resources. I am no expert in this field, and I cannot suggest how this might be done. I know only that it is possible, given the necessary determination. For example, I recall hearing on a visit to Stockholm some years ago that for the first time in many years fish were returning to the river that runs through the city. Until recently, there were none due to industrial pollution. Yet this improvement was by no means the result of all the local factories closing down. Likewise, on a visit to Germany, I was shown an industrial development designed to produce no pollution. So, clearly, solutions do exist to limit damage to the natural world without bringing industry to a halt.

This does not mean that I believe that we can rely on technology to overcome all our problems. Nor do I believe we can afford to continue destructive practices in anticipation of technical fixes being developed. Besides, the environment does not need fixing. It is our behaviour in relation to it that needs to change. I question whether, in the case of such a massive looming disaster as that caused by the greenhouse effect, a fix could ever exist, even in theory. And supposing it could, we have to ask whether it would ever be feasible to apply it on the scale that would be required. What of the expense and what of the cost in terms of our natural resources? I suspect that these would be prohibitively high. There is also the fact that in many other fields—such as in the humanitarian relief of hunger—there are already insufficient funds to cover the work that could be undertaken. Therefore, even if one were to argue that the necessary funds could be raised, morally speaking this would be almost impossible to justify given such deficiencies. It would not be right to deploy huge sums simply in order to enable the industrialized nations to continue their harmful practices while people in other places cannot even feed themselves.

All this points to the need to recognize the universal dimension of our actions and, based on this, to exercise restraint. The necessity of this is forcefully demonstrated when we come to consider the propagation of our species. Although from the point of view of all the major religions, the more humans the better, and although it may be true that some of the latest studies suggest a population implosion a century from now, still I believe we cannot ignore this issue. As a monk, it is perhaps inappropriate for me to comment on these matters. I believe that family planning is important. Of course, I do not mean to suggest we should not have children. Human life is a precious resource and married couples should have children unless there are compelling reasons not to. The idea of not having children just because we want to enjoy a full life without responsibility is quite mistaken I think. At the same time, couples do have a duty to consider the impact our numbers have on the natural environment. This is especially true given the impact of modern technology.

Fortunately, more and more people are coming to recognize the importance of ethical discipline as a means to ensuring a healthy place to live. For this reason I am optimistic that disaster can be averted. Until comparatively recently, few people gave much thought to the effects of human activity on our planet. Yet today there are even political parties whose main concern is this. Moreover, the fact that the air we breathe, the water we drink, the forests and oceans which sustain millions of different life forms, and the climatic patterns which govern our weather systems all transcend national boundaries is a source of hope. It means that no country, no matter either how rich and powerful or how poor and weak it may be, can afford not to take action in respect of this issue.

As far as the individual is concerned, the problems resulting from our neglect of our natural environment are a powerful reminder that we all have a contribution to make. And while one person's actions may not have a significant impact, the combined effort of millions of individuals' actions certainly does. This means that it is time for all those living in the industrially developed nations to give serious thought to changing their lifestyle. Again this is not

so much a question of ethics. The fact that the population of the rest of the world has an equal right to improve their standard of living is in some ways more important than the affluent being able to continue their lifestyle. If this is to be fulfilled without causing irredeemable violence to the natural world—with all the negative consequences for happiness that this would entail—the richer countries must set an example. The cost to the planet, and thus the cost to humanity, of ever-increasing standards of living, is simply too great.

*Excerpt from **Ancient Wisdom, Modern World: Ethics for the New Millennium** by Tenzin Gyatso, the Fourteenth Dalai Lama. Published by Little, Brown and Company, London, 1999 (pp 195 –202).*



22. Wildlife: A Symbol of Freedom

Peace and the survival of life on earth, as we know it, are threatened by human activities, which lack a commitment to humanitarian values. Destruction of nature and natural resources results from ignorance, greed and lack of respect for the earth's living beings. This lack of respect extends even to the earth's human descendents, the future generations who will inherit a vastly degraded planet, if world peace does not become a reality, and destruction of the natural environment continues at the present rate.

Our ancestors viewed the earth as rich and bountiful, which it is. Many people in the past also saw nature as inexhaustibly sustainable, which we now know is the case only if we care for it. It is not difficult to forgive destruction in the past that resulted from ignorance. Today, however, we have access to more information, and it is essential that we re-examine ethically what we have inherited, what we are responsible for, and what we will pass on to coming generations.

Clearly this is a pivotal generation. Exploration of outer space takes place at the same time as the earth's own oceans, seas, and fresh water areas grow increasingly polluted, and their life forms are still largely unknown or misunderstood. Many of the earth's inhabitants such as animals, plants, insects, and even micro-organisms that we know are rare may not be known at all by future generations.

A clear example of our failure to exercise discipline in the way we relate to our environment, of which I am personally aware, is present-day Tibet. It is no exaggeration to say that the Tibet I grew up in was a wildlife paradise. The chief memory of my three-month journey across Tibet from my birthplace at Taktser, in the east, to Lhasa, where I was formally proclaimed the Dalai Lama as a four-year-old boy, is of the wildlife we encountered along the way.

We always considered our wild animals a symbol of freedom. Nothing held them back; they ran free. Without them something is missing from even the most beautiful landscape. The land becomes empty, and only with the presence of wild animals can it gain its full beauty. Nature and wild animals are complementary. People who live among wildlife without harming it are in harmony with the environment. Sadly, the profusion of wildlife that once thrived in the region is no longer to be found. Partly due to hunting, but primarily due to loss of habitat, what remains is only a fraction of what there was.

Therefore, whenever I have the opportunity, I always stress the need to consider how our actions, in affecting the environment, are likely to affect others. I admit that this is very often difficult to judge; but what is clear is that we humans are the only species with the power to destroy the earth, as we know it. The birds have no such power, nor do the insects, nor does any other mammal. Yet if we have the capacity to destroy the earth, so, too, do we have the capacity to protect it, and I believe we have an urgent responsibility to do so.

*Reprinted from **Heaven and Earth and I, Ethics of Nature Conservation in Asia**, published by Penguin Enterprise, New Delhi, in association with Asian Conservation Alliance, Wild Life Trust of India and International Fund For Animal Welfare, 2002 (pp 20-21).*



23. Put Education above Wealth

Since time immemorial, Tibet is a land specially blessed by Chenre-zig, the Bodhisattva of Compassion. Judging from numerous sutras of Buddha Shakyamuni to biographies of Buddhist scholars who visited Tibet, it is clear that an extraordinary relationship was forged between Tibet and Chenre-zig. Notwithstanding the minor differences in our age-old traditions, if we look at things from a wider perspective, we will realise that Tibetan children can recite the six-syllable Buddhist mantra (Om Mani Padme Hun) without being taught to do so.

Tibetans are, by nature, very polite. Having a warm heart definitely makes a difference. Although they have the tendency to eat non-vegetarian food, they also have a rich tradition, which teaches them to have compassion even for a tiny insect like an ant. Earlier when Tibet was free, the country was endowed with rich traditions and values. Crimes, such as taking the life of a human being, were rare. It was very unsettling for people then to see such incidents.

Likewise, the country's long-held convention, which considered preservation of the environment sacred, prohibited any act of violence on wild life. Tibet's authorities also accorded legal protections to wildlife by issuing decrees, which prohibited the killing of wild animals. I know a few lamas who studied in various monasteries in Tibet. They fled the country in 1959 and since then have lived in exile in India. The lamas told me that when they returned to Tibet to see their relatives, they were shocked not to see the herds of wild animals that once moved freely in the plains of Tibet without any danger.

What can we say about other things when taking the life of a person is considered "normal" in Tibet? Our "new friends" in Tibet have taught Tibetans many things, which produced terrible results in the overall conditions of Tibet.

In the west, people own cattle farms and fisheries. Thousands of their animals are later slaughtered for consumption. In Asia, large numbers of poultry farms have been set up. The birds in these farms are mercilessly culled, when they carry risk of deadly diseases like bird flu.

Also, in Tibet, the Chinese authorities have set up fisheries, pigsties and poultry farms. Their sole aim is to make profit or raise people's income and wealth. Such development makes one very disturbed and sad. In short, we should never abandon the values and principles that have been passed on to us by our forefathers—values that espouse empathy and warm-heartedness. We need material development, as well as modern education. However, if we continue to become estranged from our ethical values and principles, then we will be plunged deeply into the ocean of suffering, because Tibetans will then start indulging in deceit, harassment and other immoral acts. At the moment, because of the Chinese restrictions, Tibetans are already torn apart by unbearable sufferings and fear.

With Tibet's economy improving slightly, Tibetans have started taking an interest in material things, and retired officers have started demanding staff quarters. These demands are all justified. But some have developed a craving for jewellery and ornaments. I have noticed this on Lhasa Television and in some of the pictures from Tibet. Some Tibetans, both men and women, have put on heavy necklaces made of gold, turquoise and amber. They also flaunt their wealth by putting on clothes trimmed with animal skins. If we think wisely, then we will realise that putting on such heavy ornaments and clothes adorned with animal skins is of no use. They are rather a huge burden on our bodies because of their enormous weight.

In the west, many people are against clothes made of animal skins. They launch campaigns, calling for a ban on such clothes. These campaigners are not Buddhists. Still they have compassion for these poor animals and fight for their protection. These acts are worthy of appreciation. In some areas of Tibet, people are

compelled to use lambskin as robes to beat the bitter winter cold. Theirs is a different case. Otherwise, it is an act of absurdity to show off one's wealth by wearing clothes trimmed with animal skins and heavy ornaments, which are basically unnecessary and also expensive. Such practice will also leave a bad impression on the minds of other people. If you think deeply, it becomes apparent that such acts display nothing but stupidity.

Instead, you should develop an interest in education, which are of two kinds: modern as well as traditional Tibetan education based on the principles of love and compassion bequeathed to us by our ancestors. If you truly want honour and self-esteem for yourselves, these two kinds of education will help you achieve them. It is absurd to gain prestige by covering yourself in dress made of animal skins.

In most societies, it is usually the less educated people who wear ornaments and gaudy dresses. As far as Tibetans are concerned, we have a rich culture, which itself is a big honour for us. Instead of paying attention to this honour, if you maintain an interest in jewellery and gaudy dress, then you will become a source of huge embarrassment.

Tibetans are making a huge mistake by taking an interest in such clothes and ornaments, thus squandering the little opportunity they have in pursuing education. Therefore, it is extremely important that along with bringing one's country to the path of development and prosperity, Tibetans must ensure that they avoid needless luxurious items and in particular acts that undermine the country's rich culture and traditions.

*Translated from His Holiness the Dalai Lama's speech in Tibetan to newly arrived Tibetans from Tibet in Dharamsala during the **Monlam teachings** on March 18, 2005.*

24. Mother Sentient Beings

I am very happy to be here with you all. I would like to thank the Wildlife Trust of India for their initiatives in wild life conservation. Till now we have been talking about human rights only. I think it would be good if we could expand that to include rights of other living beings as well. By doing that, we can show our concern about the rights of all sentient beings.

The world today is like one big family. As human beings living in this world, it is not enough to be concerned only about our food. We need a clean and beautiful environment as well. For that we need trees, lakes, animals, birds and other species. Just being concerned about our own food and shelter will deprive us much of the beauty that surrounds us, leaving us alone with no friends. There are so many things that make our own small world beautiful. For example, different animal species surviving in their natural habitats all contribute to making our world more beautiful. We must, therefore, show concern for all these things. We are, after all, human beings, not animals.

I think most of the animals live in a small area. So their main concern is food, shelter and security. Human nature is much more complex. Our life is much more sophisticated. We are not only concerned with food and shelter. We need a more beautiful environment to live in and to be comfortable with. Animals, birds, trees, etc. are like ornaments that further decorate our beautiful world.

I think that between the birds and animals in cages and those in wild forests, the latter appear much more beautiful. In cages, birds and animals are denied freedom whereas those in the forest have freedom. We cherish their freedom. Therefore, if we wipe out the environment and the living creatures, because of our greed and lack of respect for them, then the lives of our future generation will

be in jeopardy. So, it is in our own interest, as human beings, to preserve the environment and protect these animals.

Of course, all Buddhist teachings and traditions lay emphasis on the importance of *Mahakaruna* or Great Compassion. Therefore, people who believe in the rights of all sentient beings should also care for the rights of other sentient beings on this planet. As followers of the Bodhisatvayana School of Buddhism, we believe that all sentient beings have served us as our mothers at one point of time in our previous lives. In fact, we simply describe them as “mother sentient beings”. Therefore we must show respect to all forms of life in the same way we do to our own mother.

The introduction of Buddhism in Tibet has completely transformed the Tibetan way of life. Prior to this, Tibetans perhaps were performing rituals involving animal sacrifice. Even today, in the name of worshipping local deities, such rituals are performed in some of the remote areas of Tibet. However, generally speaking Tibetans are a peaceful and compassionate people, although there are many of them, including myself, who are non-vegetarians.

My own story goes like this: When I turned 65, I gave up non-vegetarian food. But after two years, my health started deteriorating. This compelled me to consume some meat again. Nevertheless, right from the beginning, from the time when I was in Tibet, I worked very hard to promote vegetarianism in Tibetan society. In the late 1940s, all the food served during Tibet’s official festivals used to be vegetarian. In India most of the prominent Tibetan monastic institutions have now started serving vegetarian food to their monks.

The Buddha’s message of *Mahakaruna* has been deeply ingrained in our way of life for more than thousand years. When Tibet was free, the Gaden Phodrang government issued a decree, prohibiting the killing of wild animals, except wolves and rats. Rats and wolves were not covered by this decree, obviously for pragmatic reasons, because these two animals were anathema to Tibetan farmers and nomads—rats destroyed crops and wolves hunted livestock.

In Tibet, before the Chinese occupation, areas near lakes controlled by the Tibetan government had a rich bird life. The government assigned and paid people to safeguard these birds and their eggs. Environmental protection in those days was not spurred by the kind of preservation awareness we have today. It was rather influenced by the Buddha's teaching of safeguarding the life of all living beings.

Traditions and cultures have generally evolved in two different ways. There are some that have evolved in the context of social and economic milieus. Such traditions, cultures and way of life undergo changes when the socio-economic contexts in which they have evolved changes. There is no need to make any effort to preserve them. However, there are other kinds of traditions and values—values that attach importance to compassion and respect to all forms of life. Such traditions and values need to be cultivated and strengthened.

In our daily life, we do realise that a compassionate heart leads to a peaceful mind. Compassion is also the driving force behind a good heart, good sleep, and a better digestion. In other words compassion brings about a happy life. Therefore, these traditions are very important and beneficial for mankind. We should make every possible effort to preserve them.

Applying external force, like our Chinese brothers do to us, is inhuman. We have intellect. Through this we can figure out what is positive and negative for us. This in turn leads us to conviction and then to positive acts.

In the exile Tibetan community, and also in Tibet, there is a lack of comprehensive knowledge and understanding of the Buddha's real message. In the exile Tibetan community, this is due to the negligence and inadequate learning of Dharma. As time passes by, more and more young Tibetans, and even some older ones, are slowly but surely becoming estranged from these deeper inner values of Buddhism. I think this is nothing but self-destruction. It

is extremely shameful. In Tibet, due to the presence of large number of Chinese, there are many obstacles and difficulties in preserving our values and traditions. But in exile, we are in a free country. Despite this, our traditions and values are eroded due to our negligence and carelessness. This is indeed very sad. We have to make sure that we preserve these rich traditions and values. This is not just for the sake of preserving the Tibetan culture itself, but for our own personal interest as well.

If we carry out scientific research on the brains of Tibetans with deeper inner values and those who are just armed with modern education, it will reveal a huge difference in the mental attitude of these two different peoples. We will come to know that the former enjoys a far better mental tranquillity than the latter.

In Tibet we had a generation that had deep knowledge of our culture and Buddhist teachings. That generation, with the exception of a handful, was wiped out in the late 1950s and early 1960s. And now due to a lack of teachers, and also due to strict control and restrictions in Tibet, it is difficult to revive and preserve Tibetan culture and Buddhist teachings. Still there are some Tibetans who show a keen interest in preserving our Buddhist culture. This is not because they have gained deeper understanding of Buddhism, but because of their nationalistic feelings of being Tibetan. However, this is not the proper way to preserve it. The only appropriate way in which we can preserve Tibetan Buddhist culture is by having a genuine awareness of its value and significance. Only by realising that preservation of these values is in our own interest, can we develop genuine interest and appreciation for our culture.

We should not be content in promoting the spiritual and political cause of Tibet, which needs to be carried out from generation to generation. In terms of our own personal spiritual development, we need to continue our efforts from this to the next life.

However, in matters of making money and gaining material things, people tend to stretch their limits, even making endless sacrifices.

Such limitless pursuit of material things, eventually, causes unwanted and unexpected problems. In Tibet, some people are very keen to put on clothes adorned with animal skins, even decorating themselves with expensive jewellery. Some Khampas (Tibetans from eastern Tibet) love to put on hats made of fox fur, with the sort of tail hanging loosely from their hats. Wearing such clothes is an act of absurdity. If your economic condition improves, you must use the money for education, to sharpen your brain, to further generate warm-heartedness towards others. Using money for ornaments and jewellery for external show but lacking intellect is a shallow practice. Tibetans should always keep in mind that we are going through a difficult period. We must stop making fools of ourselves. Time is running out for us.

Recently I heard news about a few Tibetans involved in animal skin trades. Driven by human greed and lack of moral obligations, such illegal activities are against the essence of Dharma and traditional Tibetan values. Therefore, this type of conference we are having here today, is very useful for educating our people and highlighting the importance of respect for all forms of life. We should conduct our daily lives according to these principles. That is very important.

I feel a great deal of satisfaction and appreciation to all of you for having organised this kind of conference. Recently, I came across some Chinese from Mainland China, who were dedicated to wildlife conservation. I also received a book, with pictures of animals being slaughtered in Tibet, probably for their skins and bones. I showed the book to the Chinese and posed the idea that instead of eliminating these animals for money, why not save them to create tourist hotspots. In doing so, I said, they would earn more money in the long run. The sad situation also remains a bit similar throughout the Himalayan ranges, from Ladakh to Sikkim to Tawang. So, the preservation of the Himalayan areas is the need of the hour.

I would also like to make a simple suggestion. I have made this suggestion on a few occasions when I visited Ladakh. I will make this suggestion again, though I am a bit hesitant to do it. Nowadays

people are setting up poultry farms. Although I never saw pigsties, I did see fisheries and rabbit farms somewhere in Kullu and Manali. These farms might generate profits for you, but generally as a Buddhist, who respects all forms of life, you would do well to quit this profession. Of course, it is a different case if you cannot survive without this profession. Otherwise, I would suggest you to look for an alternative source of livelihood.

During my journey from Dharamsala to Pathankot, I noticed many restaurants that kept birds in cages. Watching them suffering in those cages, I felt very sad. I was helpless. I could not buy them, as I do not have enough space to accommodate all those birds. The only thing I could do for them was to say some prayers.

In India vegetarian food is extremely delicious; even more delicious than Chinese vegetarian dishes, which are often prepared with fake meat. On one occasion during my visit to America, a Vietnamese organisation invited me to give teachings on the Buddha Dharma. The lunch they served me looked something like pork and fish. But I realised, with the help of someone, that they were serving me fake meat. The vegetarian food that is served in India is not fake, but genuine. It also tastes good, though it is a bit too oily sometimes. We should therefore make every possible effort to promote vegetarianism in the Tibetan community and also in other Buddhist communities such as in Ladakh.

Transcript of His Holiness the Dalai Lama's speech during the Tibetan Wildlife Conservation Awareness Programme, organised by the Wildlife Trust of India, New Delhi, on April 6, 2005.

25. Be a Vegetarian

My greetings and Tashi Deleg to all of you. Once again, I am here in Delhi. It has been a long time since I came across new arrivals from Tibet. It has been almost three weeks since I left Dharamsala. I will soon leave for Ladakh and then for America. I will not be in Dharamshala for the next few weeks. I know that new arrivals from Tibet do not have a few weeks to wait for me. They are likely to face problems, being in a new place. Since it is difficult for you to come to meet me at my hotel, I came here to see all of you, especially the new arrivals from Tibet. I am also glad to see a few local Tibetan residents of Delhi here.

An important thing I would like to tell you all is that I have heard of Tibetans in Tibet wearing expensive ornaments. I have seen videos of Tibetans wearing ornaments made of turquoise, coral and amber. Wearing such expensive ornaments does not serve any purpose. Tibetans do not even look good covered in such expensive ornaments. In the regions of Amdo and Kham, people frequently use skins of tiger, leopard and otter to adorn their garments. This is very unfortunate. Because of the surge in the use of tiger and leopard skins in Tibet, some Tibetans in India are involved in crimes, such as killing tigers and selling their skins in Tibet. This brings the whole Tibetan community into disrepute.

A few months ago, a newspaper in Mysore ran an article that described Tibetans indulging in animal skin trades. These Tibetans bring disgrace to the whole community. Now restrictions have been placed on Tibetans in India. Having so much interest in such worldly things as ornaments and jewellery is of no use. We cannot do much about nomads using lambskin. They have been used to using it for so long. For them it is a matter of survival since they live in harsh and inhospitable regions of Tibet where the weather is extremely cold during winter. Otherwise, having so much passion for wearing ornaments and animal skins for the sole purpose of flaunting one's wealth is inappropriate.

Although Tibet is the land where Buddhism flourished, the nomads had to live on meat as they have no other choice since the supply of vegetables and even *tsampa* (roasted barley flour) was limited in their regions. Now the situation has changed. Vegetables are found in nomadic regions of Tibet. They are also good for health. During audiences, so many people take vows from me to quit smoking and meat consumption. This is commendable. It would also be good if you could at least reduce your meat consumption.

I am often told by Tibetans arriving from Tibet that the Potala Palace is now surrounded by meat shops and that blood stains of animals can be seen everywhere around the palace. Snakes and fish are being slaughtered for consumption. In the past such things were unheard of in Tibet. Hunting wildlife and fishing was not allowed then. Tibetans who went fishing were looked down upon, except for those near the areas of Yamdrok Lake.

Since the Chinese invasion of Tibet, Tibetans have started eating all kinds of meat. I met a monk from Kham, who told me about how people sold fish in front of the Potala Palace. With tears rolling down his cheek, he narrated to me the following incident: “There was a man selling fish in front of the Potala Palace. He kept his fish, alive and kicking, in a tin box. As one Tibetan customer arrived, the man pulled a fish out of the tin box and pressed its eye to the nail affixed to the wooden board, just in front of him. The man then cut open the body of the fish with a razor-sharp knife to remove its waste, and then sold it.” He further told me that Tibetans have now learnt such evil practices and requested me to advise Tibetans to refrain from engaging in them.

Less meat consumption means good health. I knew a monk in America who often consumed meat, as well as lots of cream. All of a sudden he succumbed to death from a heart attack. This example is a profound lesson that we should take care of our diets. Despite its purported good taste, too much fat is harmful to our health. Here in India, campaigns are in full swing to promote vegetarianism amongst the Tibetan community. This is indeed commendable.

In Vinaya, eating meat is not prohibited. But in other Mahayana sutras, it is strictly forbidden. Chinese Mahayana followers have shown a deep interest in vegetarianism. Tibetans are known for eating meat. I know they are used to it. Some Tibetans complain about dizziness and nausea when they stop eating meat. Such cases are understandable. Otherwise, it would be good for Tibetans if they stopped consuming meat.

In big cities, lots of animals are already being slaughtered for meat. It would be good if this was gradually reduced. I do not think consumption of meat by a few Tibetans has any direct effect on the surge in the slaughter of animals. It still remains to be seen whether we can justify consuming meat, based on the Buddhist concept of *sNang Sum Daggai Sha*, which declares that the consumption of meat is not sinful provided we meet three conditions: that we have not seen or heard of animals being slaughtered for us, nor suspect to have been slaughtered for us.

Nevertheless, it is less sinful if you say some prayers before consuming meat of animals already slaughtered for somebody else. According to the Buddhist scholar, Acharya Lekden, consumption of the meat of an already dead animal is not sinful. He justified this by putting forward the argument that by the time the meat is consumed, the harm has already been done to the animal.

Despite this, we must make every possible effort to promote vegetarianism amongst Tibetans. I am thankful to those who have made such initiatives here in India. It would be far better if more such campaigns were organised in the future.

Translated from His Holiness the Dalai Lama's speech in Tibetan to newly arrived Tibetans from Tibet in Delhi, on August 16, 2005.

26. Stop Wearing Animal Skins

Lately, I have seen pictures of Tibetans wearing expensive ornaments and animal skins during festivals and formal gatherings in Tibet. Honestly speaking I was very much embarrassed when I saw them. I wondered how much knowledge those Tibetans possessed within themselves. Indeed if they did then they could be referred to as smart fellows, both from within and outside. Otherwise, they would only embarrass themselves by such an outward show of expensive ornaments and animal skin.

Tibetans should focus on developing inner wisdom. Whether they pursue religious or secular ends, they should be equipped with education. Wearing animal skins and heavy ornaments also puts an enormous burden on their bodies. They are also of no use in enhancing one's physical wellbeing.

I also saw a picture, showing a Tibetan with a huge ring on his finger. I wondered if he could move that finger freely. Surely, that Tibetan faces immense difficulty using his finger to prepare *pak* (roasted barley flour mixed with tea)—the staple diet of Tibet. Such acts indicate backwardness. They could become a laughing stock even for people with little intellect. We Tibetans are a sensible people and have a rich civilisation. We must build a reputation for ourselves by showing feats of excellence in both the traditional and modern fields of education. Otherwise, we are only ridiculing ourselves by flaunting outfits adorned with animal skins and expensive ornaments.

I have heard that wearing heavy ornaments and animal skins during festivals and gatherings has become a sort of fashion in Tibet. Because of this trend, I have heard of poor Tibetans having to borrow money to buy such clothes and ornaments. This is indeed very unfortunate. I therefore call upon Tibetans to avoid such stupid acts.

Similarly, our reputation is being tarnished by news of a few Tibetans involved in the animal skin trade. This illegal activity is spurred by the increasing fascination and demand amongst Tibetans in Tibet for animal skin. We have also come to know that lately the Chinese government has shown some interest in protecting the environment. Towards this end, they have even enforced strict restrictions on the killing of wild animals. This is commendable and needs to be acknowledged. During such times, we Tibetans should not become careless about these issues.

Translated from His Holiness the Dalai Lama's speech in Tibetan during the 45th anniversary of the founding of Tibetan Children's Village, Dharamshala on October 23, 2005.



27. True Wealth is Having a Peaceful and Calm Mind

Dharma literally means transformation of the human mind. It does not matter whether or not one believes in the afterlife. But at least in this life, the less disturbed one's mind is, the more happiness one will gain. If we could make a little positive change to our minds, we would not only become better human beings but also bring more happiness to our society. As long as human society enjoys peace and tranquillity, animals around us will feel less threatened.

Tibetans should stop hunting wild animals. As soon as we give up wearing clothes trimmed with animal fur, there will be less violence against animals. Throughout the world, fish are caught in very large numbers. Unbridled human greed has spurred the number of fisheries, poultry farms and pigsties around the world. Of late, these hapless creatures have been slaughtered for carrying deadly diseases such as mad cow disease and bird flu.

In the old days, Tibet had an abundance of wildlife. Animals such as *kiang* (wild ass), *tsoe* (Tibetan antelope), *gowa* (Tibetan gazelle), *naa* (blue sheep), *drong* (wild yak) could be found in large numbers. Over the decades, however, many of these animals have been hunted. As a result, some of them have now become extinct. Recently, there has been a surge in environmental awareness amongst the people. The Chinese government has also developed an interest in this issue. This is encouraging.

Despite this, trading in meat has also rapidly increased in Tibet, especially in nomadic areas. Animals like *naa* (blue sheep), *punag* (refers to male and female yaks), sheep and goats are being traded in markets. It is our ignorance, greed and lack of compassion, which leads to the slaughter of such large numbers of animals. The existence of birds and animals enhances the beauty of our natural surroundings. Moreover, our survival, as environmentalists say,

depends upon the environment. Things were different when our world had a much smaller population. However, in today's world of booming population, negligence of the environment is tantamount to deliberate destruction of our own homes. Flowers, plants and trees make our environment clean and beautiful. It is very sad if these are destroyed for commercial purposes.

Some insensitive Tibetans in Tibet wear outfits adorned with tiger, leopard and otter skins. It appears that guardian deities of Tibet decorated with such outfits are influencing them. They imitate the clothes worn by these deities, without even having an iota of knowledge about them. Such behaviour, indeed, makes every one of us feel embarrassed.

Many Tibetans are also fond of flaunting their wealth by wearing heavy gold rings on their fingers. Such rings studded with precious stones are very popular in Tibet. Some even wears such enormous rings that it is difficult for them to move their fingers. Their fingers appear as if they are injured and plastered with bandages. Mother Nature has gifted us fingers in such a way that we can move them freely. So it is better to keep them as they are. I sometimes joke with Tibetans putting on such rings that since they cannot move their fingers freely, they will have difficulties preparing *pak* (roasted barley flour mixed with tea)—the staple food of Tibet.

These days in India, we Tibetans are not considered to be humble. Almost 46 years have passed since we came into exile in India. To date we have built a good reputation for ourselves. However, of late, a few individuals involved in illegal activities such as murder, smuggling and trading in animal skins have brought disgrace to the whole Tibetan community. Our community has made progress in the field of education. We have made improvements in our economic conditions also. But instead of being contented with our lives and becoming better human beings, we seem to be becoming worse. If this trend continues, then imagine what sort of a future we will create for our people! I am just an individual,

which is not a big deal. However, Tibet's responsibilities rest on my shoulders. Tibetans indulging in illegal activities at a time when I am getting old makes me feel as if it does not matter whether I remain alive or not.

Until now I have done my best. I have maintained hope in everyone. I also pray for unity amongst Tibetans in and outside of Tibet as that will surely bring about some positive results for the Tibetan cause.

I am not sure where I will be in my next life. But I also feel that it is not worth remaining in this life, due to a few Tibetans who continue to bring the whole community into disrepute. I do not make any ideal claim of what I have done for the Tibetan cause. We Tibetans need to be very careful of ourselves. These days we are flooded with news of Tibetans indulging in illegal activities. Stories of Tibetans involved in animal skin trade are often published in the leading newspapers of India. In exile, we have been concentrating all of our efforts into reversing such trends. We are calling for a ban on killing wild animals. We also appeal to the people to invoke compassion for animals. Even campaigns promoting vegetarianism have been launched in the communities. Most of our monastic institutions have stopped serving meat in their kitchens. Campaigns against trading in animal skins are also in full swing. I really appreciate these campaigns.

I have emphasised this so many times before. I once again emphasise to all of you, particularly those from Tibet, that flaunting clothes trimmed with animal skins is nothing but an act of stupidity—a source of embarrassment to you and your fellow Tibetans.

True wealth is having education and knowledge of Dharma. True wealth is having a peaceful and calm mind. It is fine if you invite the wrathful deities to earth by wearing such clothes and expensive jewellery. Otherwise, it is nothing but an act of stupidity.

Make sure all of you pass on this message to your fellow Tibetans when you return to Tibet after the teachings. Tell them that the

Dalai Lama is embarrassed and ashamed of Tibetans wearing clothes made of animal skins.

We should realise that sometimes it is the local Chinese leaders who are deliberately urging Tibetans to put on their “best and finest” clothes during festivals. Unfortunately some innocent and silly Tibetans seem to follow the urgings of these Chinese, and thus show up with clothes trimmed with animal skins and expensive jewellery. I have also seen some pictures from Tibet, in which Tibetans wear animal skins and heavy jewellery around their necks. They look awful in those pictures. Such pictures reflect nothing but how stupid and silly Tibetans really are. Therefore, all Tibetans should be careful of such things in future.

*Translated from His Holiness the Dalai Lama's speech in Tibetan during the **Kalachakra Initiation** held in Amravati, South India, on January 9, 2006 .*



Books on Tibet's environment and development published by the DIIR:

1. Tibet: Environment and Development Issues (1992)
2. An introduction to Tibet's Natural Environment
(*in Tibetan*) (1994)
3. Green Tibet (newsletters) (1995-96) (1997) (1998)
4. His Holiness the Dalai Lama on Environment
(*in Tibetan*) (1996)
5. Me and the Environment
(*A children story book in Tibetan*) (1999)
6. Tibet 2000: Environment and Development Issues (2000)
7. China's Railway Project – Where will it take Tibet? (2001)
8. Tibet 2003: State of Environment (2003)
9. An Introduction to Environment in Ngari (*in Tibetan*) (2003)
10. Tibet's Environment: A Crucial Issue (*brochure*) (2004)
11. Endangered Species of Tibet (*Combined edition in Tibetan*)
(2004)
12. The Endangered Mammals of Tibet (2005)
13. His Holiness the Dalai Lama on Environment (*in Hindi*)
(2005)
14. Guidelines for International Development Projects
and Sustainable Development in Tibet (2006)

A video CD on the protection of wildlife in Tibetan (*sogchak-kunla-jamtse-2006*) is also available.

For the above publications, contact the Environment and Development Desk of the DIIR at ecodesk@gov.tibet.net