

H.H. DALAI LAMA AS AN ENGAGED BUDDHIST

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‘Engaged Buddhism’ or ‘Socially Engaged Buddhism’ is a movement which is still considered nascent and is seeking to actualize Buddhism’s traditional ideals of wisdom and compassion in the contemporary world. During the past few decades Buddhists have been re-examining the teachings of their religion and finding a basis for social action, for confronting war, racism, exploitation, commercialism, and the destruction of the environment.¹ At its broadest definition socially engaged Buddhism extends across public engagement in caring and service, social, and environmental protest and analysis, nonviolence as a creative way of overcoming conflict, and ‘right livelihood’ and similar initiatives toward a socially just and ecologically sustainable society. It also brings liberal Buddhist perspective to a variety of contemporary issues, from gender equality to euthanasia. It aims to combine the cultivation of inner peace with active social compassion in a practice and lifestyle that support and enrich both.² Although socially engaged Buddhism is a new form of Buddhist movement, it is obviously rooted in the very nature of Buddhism. It can be said, therefore, that socially engaged Buddhism is the reinterpretation and application of traditional Buddhist doctrines. Now engaged Buddhism is a global phenomenon, taking many different forms. The engaged movement cuts across the lay-monastic divide and includes Buddhists from traditional Buddhist countries as well as Western converts. As a matter of course, those movements have developed in some of the Buddhist countries of Asia. In many cases these movements have arisen as a heroic response to extreme conditions of invasion, civil war, and tyrannical government. Over several decades they have been inspired and led by several personalities outstanding for their integrity, steadfastness, and shared values. They include A. T. Ariyaratne of Sri Lanka, Thich Nhat Hanh of Vietnam, Ajahn Buddhadasa and Sulak Sivaraksa of Thailand, and His Holiness the Dalai Lama and the Tibetan liberation movement. Among them, the fourteenth Dalai Lama Tenzin Gyatso has become not only the world’s best-known Buddhist, but also the most prominent exemplar of a Buddhism that is socially engaged. He is a political and spiritual leader of Tibet and his people hold him in veneration as the embodiment of *Avalokiteśvara* who is considered to be the main patron Bodhisattva of Tibet. Following the Chinese invasion of Tibet in 1950s, he tried to protect Tibetan interests through cooperation with the Chinese but, after the 1959 uprising, he eventually fled to India where he is now resident in Dharamsala. Well-known for his tolerance, humility, and tireless efforts to further the Tibetan cause internationally, he received the Nobel Peace Prize in 1989. While he dedicates himself to Tibetan freedom movement, as a socially engaged Buddhist the Dalai Lama expresses his thought to various social problems in Buddhist standpoint. He is committed to working in this world to seek relief from suffering through compassion and enlightenment here-and-now. He seeks to empower ordinary people by emphasizing their Buddha nature, dignity, and inherent worth. As a Buddhist leader, he believes that he has a responsibility to all sentient

¹ Ken Gewertz, *Engaged Buddhists Take on World*, www.engagedbuddhists.org.uk/indra31.htm, 2003.

² Ken Jones, *The Social Face of Buddhism: An Approach to Political and Social Activism*, London: Wisdom Publications, 1989: 173.

beings, but states that much of his energy is focused on the cause of Tibet.³ In an interview in which he discussed his life, he declared, “My motivation is directed towards all sentient beings. There is no question, though, that on a second level, I am directed towards helping Tibetans.”⁴

The Dalai Lama asserts that for Buddhism to be an effective force for systematic institutional change, it address more forcefully, the structures of oppression, exploitation and environmental degradation, while preserving the unique Buddhist emphasis on the practice of mindful awareness and a lifestyle of simplicity. His engagement with Buddhist philosophy while addressing contemporary issues has varied implications for Tibet as well as the international community. The *weltanschauung* of the Dalai Lama considers, and examines ways in which Buddhism and social activism can contribute to each other. He says:

Buddhism and social activism can contribute to each other. This is a timely and potentially faithful field of enquiry. While the main emphasis of the Buddha’s teaching is on inner development that is no reason for Buddhists not to participate in the society in which they live. We are all dependent on others and so responsible to others. The fundamental aim of Buddhist practice, to avoid harming others and if possible to help them, will not be fully achieved simply by thinking about it. The phenomenon of social activism is an attempt by like-minded people to alleviate social problems through drawing attention to them and trying to change the attitudes of those in a position to affect them.⁵

The Dalai Lama contends that his philosophy of developing a ‘good heart’ is based on core Buddhist principles, but he maintains that it is also in accordance with the best principles of all religions.⁶ In his talks with Buddhist organizations, he often stresses the notion that compassion is basic to all Buddhist practice, and he further insists that direct engagement with other people and their problems is necessary in order to develop genuine compassion. He urges Buddhists to become involved in the world. He also insists on the necessity to achieve a balance between contemplation and social activism, as both are essential components of a healthy spiritual life.⁷ However, he issues a word of caution by suggesting that for most people no amount of contemplative activity can take the place of engagement in the world, while he also cautions that activism alone tends to become sterile and can lead to negative emotions such as frustration, anger, and hatred.⁸ He asserts that Buddhism teaches people to renounce the world, but in his view this does not mean physically separating oneself from worldly activities, but rather cultivating an attitude of cognitive detachment while still working for others. This, he asserts, is the proper attitude of a bodhisattva, who is able to work within the world for the benefit of others without becoming dragged down by its negative elements.⁹

The Dalai Lama has become a highly regarded international figure, who has done much to change

³ John Powers, *The Free Tibet Movement: A Selective Narrative*, Christopher S. Queen Ed., *Engaged Buddhism in the West*: 230.

⁴ Tenzin Gyatso, his *Life: An Interview with John Avedon*”, Sidney Piburn ed., *The Dalai Lama: A Policy of Kindness*, Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 2002: 40.

⁵ Ken Jones, *The Social Face of Buddhism*: 9.

⁶ Tenzin Gyatso, *Kindness, Clarity, and Insight*, edited by Jeffrey Hopkins & Elizabeth Napper, tr. Jeffrey Hopkins, New York: Snow Lion Publications, 1984: 9-17 & 45-50.

⁷ John Powers, *Introduction to Tibetan Buddhism*, New York: Snow Lion, 1995: 231.

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ *Ibid.*: 77.

the image of Buddhism as a “quietist and introverted spirituality.”¹⁰ He says:

“Each of us has the responsibility for all mankind. It is time for us to think of other people as true brothers and sisters and to be concerned with their welfare, with lessening their suffering. Even if you cannot sacrifice your own benefit entirely, you should not forget the concerns of others. We should think more about the future and the benefit of all mankind.”¹¹

The Dalai Lama is popular even in non-Buddhist cultures because he represents the hope for new approaches to global problems by showing new ways of relating to the world and to each other, not by leaving the world, but by being within it and staying in it.¹² According to him, “We need a new concept, a *lay spirituality*... it could lead us to set up what we are all looking for, a *secular morality*.”¹³ Thus, the answer to what is Engaged Buddhism, can be sought in the Mahāyāna reform movement, which outlines three principles as foundational to Buddhism: to avoid all evil, to cultivate good, and to serve all beings.

Too many Buddhists, he believes, withdraw from the world and cultivate their own minds, and although, this is an important first step for many, he also urges Buddhists to become involved in the world. He says:

In the first stage, sometimes we need isolation while pursuing our own inner development; however, after you have some confidence, some strength, you must remain with contact, and serve society in any field- health, education, politics, or whatever. This is important because the very purpose of practicing the Great Vehicle is service to others, you should not isolate yourselves from society. In order to serve, in order to help, you must remain in society.¹⁴

It is in such a spirit that the Dalai Lama believes that permanent recourse to religion can paralyze us. It is his conviction that above all, the ideal position to be in, is in remaining open and sensitive. If one has the means, one has to show others, what must be done. It is in this spirit that he considers the old religious inhibitions to be harmful sometimes.¹⁵

Drawing a distinction between the ‘religious’ and the ‘spiritual,’ the Dalai Lama shows that it is neither dogmatism nor religious fanaticism, that he advocates. On the contrary, his emphasis is on looking for universal ethical principles in all religions. These are the spiritual principles, because all religions emphasize similar values; therefore, he sees no use in proselytization. He says, “I believe all religions pursue the same goals, that of cultivating human goodness and bringing happiness to all human beings. Though the means might appear different, the ends are the same,”¹⁶ and therefore he concludes that all

¹⁰Ken Jones, “Liberation, Ancient and Modern,” www.peckam.demon.co.uk/alpha.htm.

¹¹Tenzin Gyatso in Fred Eppsteiner (ed), *The Path of Compassion: Writings on Socially Engaged Buddhism*, Berkeley: Parallax Press, 1985: 8.

¹²P.H. Brown, “Socially Engaged Buddhism,” www.buddhanetz.org/texte/brown/htm

¹³Cited in Chappel, *Tricycle*, fall 1995: 77.

¹⁴Tenzin Gyatso, “A Talk to Western Buddhists,” in S. Piburn (ed & compiler), *The Dalai Lama: A Policy of Kindness: An Anthology of Writings by and about the Dalai Lama*, Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1990: 82.

¹⁵Dalai Lama and Jean-Claude Carriere, *The Power of Buddhism*, Dublin: Newleaf, 1988: 40.

¹⁶*Nobel Peace Prize Award Ceremony 1989: Speeches*, Office of Information & International Relations, Dharamsala, nd: 14.

religions have a similar motivation- that of love and compassion.¹⁷

The Dalai Lama's contribution to religion, primarily consists in conceiving a humanistic religion that centers almost entirely on man and his life in this world. According to him, religion should pervade all our activities and cannot be pursued in seclusion from one's fellow beings or even as separate from life's other activities. It is in consonance with the integral totality of his thought and is based on the logic that human life cannot and should not be segregated into separate compartments.

The engaged ethic in the Dalai Lama's thought comes to the fore vis-a-vis man's relation to the society and through the role of politics in social life. He makes it clear that 'a man of religion' should not isolate himself from society:

In the correlation between ethics and politics should deep moral convictions form the guidelines for the practical practitioners, man and his society will reap far-reaching benefits. It is an absurd assumption that religion and morality have no place in politics and that a man of religion and a believer in morality should seclude himself as a hermit. These ideas lack proper perspective vis-a-vis man's relation to his society and the role of politics in our lives. Strong moral ethics are as concomitantly crucial to a man of politics as they are to a man of religion, for dangerous consequences are foreseen when our politicians and those who rule forget their moral principles and convictions... We need human qualities such as moral scruples, compassion and humility... The functional importance of religion and social institutions towards promoting these qualities thus assumes a serious responsibility and all efforts should be concentrated sincerely in fulfilling these needs.¹⁸

Despite the progressive secularization brought about by worldwide modernization and despite systemic attempts to destroy spiritual values, a vast majority of people continue to believe in one religion or another. Faith in religion, evident even under nonreligious political systems, clearly demonstrates the potency of religion as such. The spiritual energy and power can be purposefully used to bring about the spiritual conditions necessary for world peace. It is with due consideration for such a perception that the Dalai Lama says that "Religious leaders and humanitarians all over the world have a special role to play in this respect."¹⁹ He suggests two ways of going about it. One, by promoting better interfaith understanding so as to create a workable degree of unity among all religions. He suggests that this can be done in part, by respecting each other's beliefs and by emphasizing a common concern for human well-being. Two, by bringing about a viable consensus on basic spiritual values, that touch every human heart and enhance general human happiness. He suggests that "this means we must emphasize the common denomination of all religions- humanitarian ideals." It is his opinion that these two steps will together lead to the creation of the necessary spiritual conditions for world peace.²⁰ The Dalai Lama's contribution to religion consists in conceiving a humanistic religion that centers almost wholly on the human being and his/her evolution in this capacity. According to him, religion (or as he sees them- the humanitarian ideals in spirituality), should pervade all our activities and cannot, just as it ought not, to be pursued in seclusion

¹⁷Tenzin Gyatso, *Kindness, Clarity, and Insight*, edited by Jeffrey Hopkins & Elizabeth Napper, tr. Jeffrey Hopkins, New York: Snow Lion Publications, 1984: 21.

¹⁸"Place of Ethics and Morality in Politics," in A.A. Shiromany, *The Spirit of Tibet, Vision for Human Liberation: Selected Speeches and Writings of His Holiness the XIV Dalai Lama*, New Delhi: Tibetan Parliamentary and Policy Research Centre with Vikas Publishing House, 1996: 60.

¹⁹"World Religions for World Peace," in A.A. Shiromany, *The Spirit of Tibet, Vision for Human Liberation: Selected Speeches and Writings of His Holiness the XIV Dalai Lama*, New Delhi: Tibetan Parliamentary and Policy Research Centre with Vikas Publishing House, 1996: 267.

²⁰*Ibid.*: 267.

from one's fellow-beings and in separation from life's other activities. This perception of the Dalai Lama, is in consonance with the logic, that human life cannot be divided into separate, watertight compartments- his emphasis thus is that, all the seemingly separate segments- religious, moral, political, economic, social, individual, and collective are the only different expressions of human life and ought to be seen thus.

Talking about religious tolerance and harmony, he says that "there are enough grounds on which we can build harmony between the various religions and develop a genuine respect towards each other."²¹ In his view "no one has the right to impose his or her beliefs on another person."²² He feels that "not only are there values shared by all religions, but also by all human beings and all forms of life. Love of one's neighbor, affection, tenderness, kindness are all at the basis of a universal ethic."²³ As a humanist, the Dalai Lama's attitude of tolerance for all religions is derived from his conviction of the fundamental unity of all religious beliefs of mankind and therefore the possibility of a universal religious peace. It is on the concept of '*chos-srid-zung-brel*' which means 'the harmonious blend of religion and politics,' that the Dalai Lama bases his religio-political thought.²⁴ It has been suggested that "with the passing of years, intentionally or not, the Dalai Lama has become a seasoned politician."²⁵ This statement solicits attention in the light of the engaged Buddhist ethic the Dalai Lama employs, firstly, to show that religion cannot be pursued in seclusion and in separation from the activities of life and secondly, by conjoining religion with politics.

In his attempt to extricate himself and the system he represents from the past, the Dalai Lama has been searching more democratic and transparent methods of religious succession, without however, entirely abandoning the doctrine of reincarnation. In fact, the Dalai Lama has said that the reincarnation could be born in any human form: "Next Dalai Lama could be an Indian or European or African- even a woman. Body doesn't matter."²⁶ He says further, "My name, my popularity are useful in other fields, like promotion of human values and of harmony among world religions. It is wise that my energy should be devoted to these things rather than remain Dalai Lama."²⁷ As one of the most persistent advocates of reform, the Dalai Lama has tried to change the political system he himself embodies by promulgating a charter for the Tibetans in exile. And, in his own admission, the Dalai Lama states that the Chinese did the Tibetans a favour by forcing them to purify their religion, which according to him, in some cases, had become obsessed with form and splendour at the expense of content.²⁸ He further says:

I believe that despite the rapid advances made by civilization in this century, the most immediate cause of our present dilemma is our undue emphasis on material development alone. We have become so engrossed in its pursuit that, without even knowing it, we have neglected to foster the most basic needs of love, kindness, cooperation, and caring. If we

²¹The Dalai Lama, *The Power of Compassion*, fifth impression, New Delhi: HarperCollins, 1998: 116.

²²*Ibid.*: 1.

²³H.H. the Dalai Lama, *Beyond Dogma: The Challenge of the Modern World*, tr. Alison Anderson, ed. Marianne Dresser, New Delhi: Rupa & Co, 2000: 151.

²⁴Namkhai Norbu, *The Necklace of gZi: A Cultural History of Tibet*, Dharamsala: Narthang Publications, 1981: 28.

²⁵Pierre-Antoine Donnet, *Tibet: Survival in Question*, tr. Tica Broch, Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1994: 176.

²⁶"Dalai Lama Desires Apolitical Role," *Tibetan Review*, vol. XXXIV, no. 9, September 1999: 11.

²⁷*Ibid.*: 10.

²⁸R. Hicks & Ngakpa Chogyam, *Great Ocean: An Authorized Biography of the Buddhist Monk Tenzin Gyatso His Holiness the Fourteenth Dalai Lama*, London: Penguin Books, 1984: 136-137.

do not know someone or find another reason for not feeling connected with a particular individual or group, we simply ignore them. But the development of human society is based entirely on people helping each other. Once we have lost the essential humanity that is our foundation, what is the point of pursuing only material development?²⁹

Even though the Dalai Lama institution is closely linked to religion and is fostered by it, the Dalai Lama makes a break from it by clearly asserting that any sectarian view of religion would lead to the situation where politics or religion cannot be viewed as two related domains. Thus, the Dalai Lama rejects the view that politics is inherently 'dirty.' He aims to 'spiritualize' it. According to the Dalai Lama, whether a conflict lies in the field of politics, economics or religion, an altruistic approach is frequently the sole means of resolving it. He sees the very concepts that are used to mediate a dispute, as the cause of the problem. At such times he suggests that when a resolution seems impossible, both sides should recall the basic human nature that unites them, thus helping in breaking the impasse and in the long run, making it easier for everyone to attain their goal.

Inspired by the Buddha's message of nonviolence and compassion, he exhorts the Tibetans as well as the international community to respect every form of life and abandon war as an instrument of national policy. The Dalai Lama has time and again reiterated that this approach is the most beneficial and practical course in the long run for the Tibetans. In this sense, the Dalai Lama would differ with Marx, who thought that violence is the midwife of history and that only in periods of violence does history show its true face, to "dispel the fog of the hypothetical dialogue and moral pretensions."

It has been suggested that seeing the Dalai Lama's stand on nonviolence as pacifist is a misreading of his nonviolent struggle which is neither pacifist, nor passive. It has further been suggested that the 'intellectual shallowness,' which would seek to change or alter philosophical alignments³⁰ is radically different from the Dalai Lama's. Suggestions go that the Dalai Lama has understood for three decades that nonviolent resistance is for the strong-willed and the principled that refuses to rely on the logic of stopping the enemy's bad violence with one's own good violence.³¹ In an extremely optimistic vein, the Dalai Lama feels that the 'inevitable transition' towards the achieving of aspirations, can be made without resorting to *violence*.³² In this context, he has emphasized his admiration and firm belief in nonviolent struggles world-over. He acknowledges that he is a firm believer in nonviolence on moral as well as 'practical grounds.'³³ Remarkably, he says: "Oppose the action, but not the person."³⁴ This has been a powerful message for the Tibetans world over. The Dalai Lama comments, "Frankly, as a child, I was attracted to the military. Their uniforms looked so smart and beautiful. But that is exactly how the seduction

²⁹Dalai Lama, Bstan-'Dzin-Rgy, & Fabian Kuaki, *Imagine All the People: A Conversation With the Dalai Lama on Money, Politics and Life As It Could Be*, Boston: Wisdom Publications, 2003: 144-145.

³⁰Dalai Lama, "The Dalai Lama's Radical Non-Violence," in Coleman McCarthy (ed), *Speeches, Statements, Articles, and Interviews: 1987 to June 1995*, Dharamsala: Department of Information and International Relations, 1995: 137.

³¹*Ibid.*

³²"World Peace and the Environment," in A.A. Shiromany (ed), *The Political Philosophy of His Holiness XIV Dalai Lama: Selected Speeches and Writings*, New Delhi: Tibetan Parliamentary and Policy Research Centre and Friedrich-Naumann-Stiftung, 1998: 126.

³³"Speech at Lithuanian Parliament," in A.A. Shiromany (ed), *The Political Philosophy of His Holiness XIV Dalai Lama: Selected Speeches and Writings*, New Delhi: Tibetan Parliamentary and Policy Research Centre and Friedrich-Naumann-Stiftung, 1998: 71.

³⁴"Dalai Lama Against Hatred Towards Chinese," *Tibetan Review*, Delhi, vol. XXXV, no. 5, May 2000:

begins.”³⁵ The Dalai Lama purports that if it was not for the fact that so many adults in this world are fascinated and mesmerized themselves by military and war that we could all see more clearly that allowing our children to play such games is extremely unfortunate. The Dalai Lama tells of how some former soldiers have through the years told him that at first when they killed someone, it made them feel awkward. But as time on the battlefield progressed, they grew desensitized and more and more accustomed to the act of taking life. That is the condition many of us seem to be in. We see so much of this on either the news or in the form of movies that we are completely desensitized as to the harm it is actually doing everyone. He refers to the plague Tibet underwent at the hands of Mao, and how this medicine was the requisite every Tibetan needed and sometimes still needs to fully heal from those terrible atrocities.³⁶

Thus, it can be seen that the Dalai Lama recognizes the practical limitations of nonviolence but continues his attempts to reduce violence and replace it with nonviolence. The Dalai Lama attempts to make nonviolence a powerful plea for tolerance, universal responsibility and a compassionate and humane solution to contemporary human problems, which in sum can be seen in his attempts at finding viable means of conflict resolution.

Considered one of the foremost arbiters of human and environmental rights, the Dalai Lama cognizes rights of the human being as inherent in the Buddhist notions of human ‘dignity’ and ‘compassion’ and conceptualizes them, by postulating the reciprocity of ‘rights’ and ‘responsibilities.’ The idea of ‘reciprocity’ as found in the Buddhist theory, encapsulates as also conceptualizes its theory of rights. Scholars who accept the concept of ‘rights’ as implicit in classical Buddhism contend that “under Dharma, husbands and wives, kings and subjects, teachers and students, all have reciprocal obligations which can be analyzed into rights and duties. We must qualify this conclusion, however, by noting that the requirements of Dharma are almost always expressed in the form of duties rather than rights... Until rights as personal entitlements are recognized as discrete but integral part of what is due under Dharma, the modern concept of rights cannot be said to be present.”³⁷ He believes that “human rights are a universal value; it is out of the question to begin to make distinctions on the basis of culture, education, or any other characteristic, because by birth every human being has the same rights.”³⁸ According to the Dalai Lama, “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 future generations, the proper care of the environment.”³⁹ From this point of view, universal responsibility is not even a principle; it is an inherent aspect of everyone’s deepest sense of being, thus, “we need to cultivate a universal responsibility for one another and the planet we share.”⁴⁰ Human dignity in Buddhism lies in the infinite potential or capacity of human nature for participating in goodness. Emerging from Buddhist philosophy, the Dalai Lama’s *weltanschauung* is representative of the fundamental sameness of

³⁵“The Seduction of the Military,” in Dalai Lama, Bstan-‘Dzin-Rgy, & Fabian Kuaki, *Imagine All the People: A Conversation With the Dalai Lama on Money, Politics and Life As It Could Be*, Boston: Wisdom Publications, 2003.

³⁶“The Medicine of Altruism,” in Dalai Lama, Bstan-‘Dzin-Rgy, & Fabian Kuaki, *Imagine All the People: A Conversation With the Dalai Lama on Money, Politics and Life As It Could Be*, Boston: Wisdom Publications, 2003.

³⁷Damien Keown, *Contemporary Buddhist Ethics*, Richmond, Surrey: Curzon Press, 2000: 63.

³⁸H.H. the Dalai Lama, *Beyond Dogma: The Challenge of the Modern World*, tr. Alison Anderson, ed. Marianne Dresser, New Delhi: Rupa & Co, 2000: 133.

³⁹“Speech at Parliamentary Earth Summit,” in A.A. Shiromany, *The Spirit of Tibet, Universal Heritage, Selected Speeches and Writings of His Holiness the XIV Dalai Lama*, New Delhi: Tibetan Parliamentary and Policy Research Centre with Allied Publishers, 1995: 299.

⁴⁰*Nobel Peace Prize Award Ceremony 1989: Speeches*, Office of Information & International Relations, Dharamsala, nd: 13.

all human beings.⁴¹

Such a thought process in the Dalai Lama's thought is especially influenced by the Buddhist doctrine of *Dependent Arising (Pratityasamutpāda)*- fundamental to all the teachings of the Buddha. It is in this sense that the Dalai Lama says: "It is a major error, a 'root-error,' to isolate human life, to attribute to it an essence, an in-itself."⁴² According to the Doctrine of Dependent Arising, nothing is created or can exist apart from this network of interpretations, things cannot exist independently. The world is interpellated to the extent that when we generate wholesome or unwholesome energies, it will affect others and everything in it either for good or ill.

The Dalai Lama systematically criticizes the Tibetans for not having been progressive and emphasizes as to how neglecting technological and economic development in Tibet was a crucial mistake for the Tibetans:

As the Dalai Lama freely admits, there was a lot wrong with the old Tibet. The innate conservatism of Tibetans, combined with a reaction against the dramatic events of the early years of the century, meant that they had tried to resist almost all of the changes which were inevitable if Tibet was to survive into the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.⁴³

He strongly feels that "a clean environment is a human right like any other. It is therefore part of our responsibility toward others to ensure that the world we pass on is as healthy, if not healthier, than we found it."⁴⁴ Moreover, he feels that "the human heart and the environment are inseparably linked together. In this sense, environmental education helps to generate both the understanding and the love we need to create the best opportunity there has ever been for peace and lasting coexistence."⁴⁵ In accordance with the Buddhist teachings, the Dalai Lama maintains that there is a very close interdependence between the natural environment and the sentient beings living in it.⁴⁶ Following, *Dependent Arising*, he preaches that one aspect of life connects with every other.⁴⁷ He says: "nation to nation, continent to continent, we are heavily dependent upon each other. For instance, thousands upon thousands of new cars are moving in the streets of New York, Washington, or Los Angeles, but without oil they cannot move. Though at the moment human beings are carried by cars, if that fuel is finished, the humans will have to carry these big cars. Prosperity depends upon other factors in other places. Whether we like it or not, this shows that we are interdependent. We can no longer exist in complete isolation."⁴⁸ "All... demarcations are artificially made."⁴⁹ He further points out that:

⁴¹The Dalai Lama, "Asian values and Democracy," *Tibetan Bulletin*, Dharamsala: Department of Information and International Relations, vol. 3, no. 1, January-February, 1999: 19.

⁴²Dalai Lama and Jean-Claude Carriere, *The Power of Buddhism*, Dublin: Newleaf, 1988: 35.

⁴³R.Hicks & Ngakpa Chogyam, *Great Ocean: An Authorized Biography of the Buddhist Monk Tenzin Gyatso His Holiness the Fourteenth Dalai Lama*, London: Penguin Books, 1984: 140.

⁴⁴Matthew E. Bunson (ed), *The Dalai Lama's Book of Wisdom*, London: Rider, 2000: 211.

⁴⁵*H.H. the XIV Dalai Lama on the Environment*, Dharamsala: Department of Information and International Relations, CTA, 1995: 32.

⁴⁶Dalai Lama, "Foreword," in M.L. Dewan, *Toward A Sustainable Society: Perceptions*, New Delhi: Clarion Books, 1995: 11.

⁴⁷Tenzin Gyatso, *Kindness, Clarity, and Insight*, edited by Jeffrey Hopkins & Elizabeth Napper, tr. Jeffrey Hopkins, New York: Snow Lion Publications, 1984: 9.

⁴⁸*Ibid.*: 61.

⁴⁹*Ibid.*: 158.

[I]f humankind continues to approach its problems considering only temporary expediency, future generations will have to face tremendous difficulties. The global population is increasing, and our resources are being rapidly depleted. Look at the trees, for example. No one knows exactly what adverse effects massive deforestation will have on the climate, the soil, and global ecology as a whole. We are facing problems because people are concentrating only on their short-term, selfish interests, not thinking of the entire human family. They are not thinking of the earth and the long-term effects on universal life as a whole.⁵⁰

The Dalai Lama gives logical reasons for the Buddhist belief in reincarnation, which he feels instills a responsibility and a sense of universal responsibility and thus of a concern for the future. Following this logic he believes that Tibetan “belief in reincarnation is one example of... (their)... concern for the future.”⁵¹ Thus, in his view, “To act altruistically, concerned only for the welfare of others, with no selfish or ulterior motives, is to affirm a sense of universal responsibility.”⁵²

⁵⁰“Human Approach to World Peace,” in A.A. Shiromany, *The Spirit of Tibet, Universal Heritage, Selected Speeches and Writings of His Holiness the XIV Dalai Lama*, New Delhi: Tibetan Parliamentary and Policy Research Centre with Allied Publishers, 1995: 261.

⁵¹Dalai Lama, “Universal Responsibility and the Environment,” *On the Environment: Collected Statements*, Dharamsala: Department of Information and International Relations, 1992: 16.

⁵²Matthew E. Bunson (ed), *The Dalai Lama’s Book of Wisdom*, London: Rider, 2000: 175.

Dalai Lamas are believed to be the reincarnation of Avalokitesvara, an important Buddhist deity and the personification of compassion. Dalai Lamas are also enlightened beings who have postponed their own afterlife and chosen to take rebirth to benefit humanity. "Dalai" means "ocean" in Mongolian (the name "Gyatso" comes from the Tibetan word for ocean). "Lama" is the equivalent of the Sanskrit word "guru," or spiritual teacher. Known as an effective public speaker, the Dalai Lama is often described as charismatic. His message is always one of peace and compassion for people all over the world. During his travels abroad, he has stressed the need for a better understanding of and respect among different faiths of the world. Tenzin Gyatso, the Fourteenth Dalai Lama, is the spiritual leader of the Tibetan people. He frequently describes himself as a simple Buddhist monk. As a superior scholar trained in the classical texts of the Nalanda tradition of Indian Buddhism, he is able to distill the central tenets of Buddhist philosophy in clear and inspiring language, his gift for pedagogy imbued with his infectious joy. Once again HH Dalai Lama presents sound, meaningful life messages in an approachable fashion. This is a short book with short chapters averaging 10-12 pages each. Each chapter is like a life lesson that has a meditative exercise at the end. Je recommande ce livre à tous ceux qui sont engagés dans une pratique exigeante de la voie spirituelle (non nécessairement bouddhiste). Read more. Question to H.H. the Dalai Lama at the press conference at Tibet House, Frankfurt, Thursday, 14. September 2017. Ursula Richard: Your Holiness, I would like to ask you to say a few words about abusive behavior in Buddhist or religious institutions in general, and how we, as a society, as Buddhist communities, can deal with it and support the victims. His Holiness the Dalai Lama: Now in America, some religious organization, the head, as a matter of fact Tibetan, I know him, he behaved as if he himself disgraced. And many of his old students now publicly, sort of went against him. It's right! You see Engaged Buddhism. Buddhist parents. Laughing Buddha. Though my reading so far, the two terms above are kind of confusing me. I get the sense that a buddha is one that has reached spiritual enlightenment, and the latter is one forgoes the enlightenment part and focuses on the service to others. Is that correct and if so which one is the dalai lama? I know he's a spiritual leader but I also know that's he's a very big activist for human/civil rights. So would he be a bodhisattva? The Dalai Lama is keen to separate his relationship with the president, or lack of one, with that of other American politicians. He highlights the vice-president's support for the Tibetan people and the backing he has enjoyed from politicians in both houses of Congress. President Trump's apparent snub is reflective of the wider pressure Beijing is able to exert on those who engage with the Dalai Lama. In 2012, China temporarily froze relations with the UK after David Cameron met him and. last year, the Indian government cancelled its plans for a celebration to mark 60 years of his ex