

ADDRESS BY H.H. DALAI LAMA¹

Indeed, I am very happy to come here. During the 1956 Buddha Jayanti celebrations, I came through Sikkim and returned from this town, from this very area. Emotionally, Sikkim is very close with Lhasa; I think perhaps from Lhasa, Dharamsala is quite far. I was born in Amdo area. For about 3 to 4 years, I remained there, and the rest of the years, I lived in Lhasa; so, emotionally, Sikkim is very close in our mind. There has been a lot of progress here, indeed, and I am very happy.

Now, the conference or dialogue with modern scientists has lasted, I think, around 30 years. Originally, it was my own personal curiosity. Since my childhood, I have had a keen interest in technology, and about science. Then eventually, it became quite clear that the meeting with modern scientists is of immense help to mutual learning. Now, this kind of dialogue actually is institutionalised.

In the past several years now, selected monk students have been carrying out the study of science in Tibetan refugee monastic institutions. Now that we already have translations in Tibetan about science, eventually, these have been introduced in these big monastic institutions. Originally, some of our older scholars and *geshes* had a little reservation when I said it is necessary to study science. They say they had a little reservation, but now they find it is very useful.

Actually, I think 40 years ago, when I indicated or expressed to some of my friends—some Americans, actually Buddhists—my desire to open dialogue or discussion with modern science, some of them actually cautioned me, “Be careful, science is the killer of religion, so therefore, be careful.” Then I thought, thought and thought: How? No!

In Buddhism—Pali tradition; then Sanskrit tradition, like Nagarjuna; and many great masters of Nalanda, which was a monastic sort of university—see, they very much emphasised scepticism; they waited for the scepticism, and investigated. Through investigation, then you will find the reality. Without investigation, you cannot find reality; without scepticism, you may not bring about investigation.

Buddha himself expressed or told his followers: “Oh, my followers, *bikshus* and others, should not accept my teaching out of faith and

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devotion, but rather through investigation and experiments.” Therefore, we Buddhists have some kind of liberty to investigate even Buddha’s own word. Nagarjuna, Arya Sangha, Arya Deva, Buddha Prabita, Aryabhata, all these great masters, they followed the Buddha’s advice, Buddha’s own word; they carried out investigations as to whether certain points mentioned in certain text of Buddha’s own word could become acceptable or not through logical investigation. If we take certain points, even in Buddha’s own word, but still find contradiction with reason, with experiment, then we have a right or liberty to reject that. Therefore, that is a very scientific way or sort of study. So therefore I thought, no problem, whether science is really a killer of religion or not, I have to investigate. Therefore, we started with meetings or discussions with scientists. Now it seems, instead of being a killer, science is becoming more of a supporter. This is just a sort of a background, a short history about that (interaction with scientists).

Then a few months ago, you (Director NIT Tashi Densapa) came to Dharamsala to start discussions. Then I suggested that this kind of conference should take place in Sikkim, it’s very relevant. In the meantime, I also stated a fact; frankly speaking, if this kind of meeting takes place here, that also gives me an opportunity to come. So now, this meeting has materialised, and also, I have had the opportunity to come, but the timing, the season, it is quite cold. I think, for our guests, the scenery is really beautiful, but it is quite cold. Anyways, I am indeed very happy.

Now, I just want to mention three points:

1) On the academic level, the knowledge level, modern science in the field of external things is highly developed, and really remarkable. Yet, with regard to inner science about the human mind, about inner peace or mental stability, everybody is very experienced but there is very little knowledge about how important this is, and how to develop these things. So in these fields, I think Eastern philosophy, particularly India’s traditions contain lots of material about emotions, about the mind, and how to shape a positive sort of mind, transform a positive mind, and also the methods. Buddhism and Hinduism, Jainism, all Indian traditions, for thousands of years, they have carried practices of *Samadhi* and *Vipassana*, all these are related to the mind. So here, we have quite rich information about inner science. In order to become more complete, modern science must focus on external things and internal things. This kind of dialogue is actually helping to expand our knowledge about inner science, and inner reality. That is the first point.

2) The second point is, I always tell people: I am Buddhist. Of course, I am a practitioner, with four to five hours of meditation or prayers in my daily life, but still I am very sceptical about the power of blessing, about the power of prayer. Just a few months ago, I was in Japan, where in Hiroshima, there was some meeting of Noble Laureates. On the final day, there was a big gathering, and those Noble Laureates, and I expressed my view that ‘world peace’ cannot come through prayer, through blessing; peace must come through our action, action is more important than prayer, than blessing.

Also, a few months ago, I was in Patna. The Bihar Chief Minister constructed a huge *vihara*. He invited me, so I went there. In his speech, he mentioned that due to Buddha’s blessing, Bihar state would progress rapidly. Then it was my turn to talk. Of course, I know the Chief Minister very well, so I told him, if Bihar state’s development is due to Buddha’s blessing, then Bihar state should have developed much earlier. The reality is, while Buddha’s blessing is there, it is taken for granted. The Buddha’s blessing must go through active Chief Minister’s hand, through his action.

Now, I think, due to Buddha’s blessing as well as Padmasambhava’s blessings, if you do nothing, but just remain there, or add some lamas carrying out *pūja* day and night, your progress will not happen. You must work hard, that is important. My point is, for the last few thousand years, human being on this planet pray whenever they face some problem or difficulties. Individually, yes, we pray. Some help, but not on a community level, no.

I think science and technology developed around two-three centuries ago. Technology immediately brought certain things that we wanted, so naturally, people felt science and technology were really miracles and really bring some big change, so naturally people paid more attention to technology, or science and material things. Since then, people gradually neglected our inner values. The last century, twentieth century, has been a truly marvellous century. Technology and science really developed immensely, but in the meantime, it also brought a lot of scientific knowledge and technology, and the ability of becoming destructive forces including nuclear weapons and neutron bombs. Technologically, and scientifically, these were really great achievements, but these achievements brought more fear and more destruction instead of bringing more happiness. According to some historian, in the twentieth century, over 200 million people were killed through violence. Although the concept of war has been there for thousands of years, the destruction has been limited because the

destructive power was limited. In the twentieth century, the power of destruction increased immensely because of technology, because of science. I think the people who invented science and technology never intended to bring more suffering, and more fear to humanity, but it came about to be like that. This clearly shows that if we just leave science and technology alone, we will not be very sure whether it really brings happiness or fear. This is one factor.

I think due to these factors, in the latter part of the twentieth century, the top scientists began to feel the importance of the human mind and certain human emotions in two ways. One way is to share knowledge—like you are now here, great scientists who carry out research about the brain; naturally, brain particles are very much linked with emotion. If there is a change, certain emotions come; these emotions have some effect on our brain. The academic research about subtle levels of brain neurons has reached a very high level, so they now begin to pay more attention to emotions and mind on an academic level.

Then on another level also examined earlier, more and more people are now really talking that we need moral ethics in every field. In the field of religion also, due to lack of moral ethics, religion is also sadly becoming an instrument of exploitation. It has also happened among the Buddhist community. Then with all other religious traditions, due to lack of moral principles, some dirty things are happening. I share with other people, usually people say ‘dirty politics’—Governor above politics, Chief Minister still very active in politics—so with politics, people usually say ‘dirty politics’. I have the view that politics is very important, it is another sort or kind of instrument to serve people, to serve community, to serve the country. It is necessary, but politics itself is nothing dirty; because politicians lack moral principles, politics becomes dirty politics. So, similarly, in religion, if people like myself, with monk’s robe, if we think only of money, or name, and use religious teachings, then that religion also become ‘dirty religion’. And even the economy, or even with scientists, with lack of moral principle, science can be ‘dirty science’, so therefore now we really need to look everywhere: corruption is now almost like a universal disease. A few people are killed; the death sentence is not asked for. You must beg for moral ethics based on realization of human value. Therefore, now it is quite obvious, whether we are religious believers or non believers, everywhere more thinking people accept or realize that we have some problems due to lack of inner strength or moral ethics.

Now in order to promote these moral ethics, here is a different view. Some of my friends, some Christians, some Muslims, they show me great reservation when I use the term ‘secular ethics’—they say secularism is something a little negative towards religion. They have this kind of understanding or view, and many believers also believe that any moral ethics must be based on religious faith. You know, the late Pope John Paul came from Poland. He had a similar sort of experience with the Poles, so since our first meeting, we became very close spiritual fellows—we shared a sort of brotherhood, we were very close. So one time, I boldly asked him whether moral ethics should be based on religious faith or not. He did not answer, but his lieutenant answered, “Oh, any moral ethics must be based on religious faith.” My point is, if everybody accepts moral ethics is necessary, if moral ethics must be based on religion faith, then in a place like India, it causes further complication: What religion? What faith? Here, Sikhism I think, later developed and I think is very much into the spirit of non-sectarian bias, wonderful. Isn’t it wonderful that Guru Nanak, at one time, went on pilgrimage to Mecca? Anyway, there are so many different religions in this country, it is so difficult. So naturally, because of that reality, our forefathers like Gandhi, Rajendra Prasad, and Dr Ambedkar, and all these scholars and lawyers, when they made India’s constitution, they decided that India’s constitution must be based on secularism. So secularism does not mean disrespect of any religion, but rather respect all religions as being equal.

So secularism does not mean some kind of negativity towards religion. There must also be a secular way to promote ethics. In my view point, any ethics is based on a sense of concern for others’ well-being. If you have a genuine sense of concern for others’ well-being, then there is no room to harm others, there is no room to cheat, there is no room for exploitation. As long as a sense of concern of others’ well-being exists, then you can be transparent, and truthful, that really brings trust, for trust is the basis of friendship. We are social animals, we need co-operation, for that we need genuine friendship, and we need trust. In order to develop trust, you should be honest, and transparent. If you are saying something, and doing something different, then how can trust develop? If Inner strength is there, more compassionate feeling is there—inner strength, real inner strength that allows us to be self-confident and open to everybody—that’s the basis of trust, for mutual trust. So now we are here, not necessarily for religion and faith, we are just using our common sense, using our common experience. I always tell people—for example, there are perhaps a few hundred people

here—everybody comes from one’s mother. At a very young age, everybody received maximum affection from one’s mother. I think scientists can find people outwardly have a smart appearance but deep inside, those individuals who received maximum affection from their mother are much more stable than those individuals who lacked affection from their mother. People who have some kind of fear due to abuse or other such experiences as a child, will, for the rest of their lives, harbour deep inside, some kind of sense of insecurity, that brings frustration, and lack of self-confidence, and that creates more problem.

So, therefore, these are moral ethics not based on religious faith. Using common sense and common experience, then the scientific finding, as a great scientist, both, clear presentation, these are very useful, more warm heartedness is immense benefit to happy family, happy individual, even healthy body. Then ultimately, world peace, or genuine equality, or reduction of the gap between rich and poor (on a global level as well as national level), all this is ultimately related with inner moral ethics. So, if inner moral ethics should be pursued through religious faith, then more complication will arise; pursuing without touching religion is simply the secular way to promote this. This promotion, as you mentioned, happens in the young by educating them. Moral ethics is one’s own benefit, one’s own happy life. Everybody is selfish, so if people realize this warm-heartedness is of immense benefit to one’s self, one’s own family, then they will pay more attention to these things. If we say, you should practice compassion because Buddha loves compassion, or Jesus Christ loves compassion, then many people say, “Oh, I don’t care.” But, if we say, compassion is important for your own health, for your own happy days and nights, then it is clear people pay more attention.

I think I am Buddhist, I have due respect for Buddha and all other spiritual leaders. I think they showed us certain methods to promote these things, but frankly speaking, they more or less failed. Of course, some individuals did benefit, but I don’t think humanity as a whole, nearly seven billion human beings, benefited. Now we need to promote ethics secularly—not through lama, not through teacher, not through saint, but through education—we can do it using these materials, and the most important part are the scientific findings. So that’s point no 2. That’s why in order to bring about a happy humanity, a happy society, a happy individual, moral ethics are important but the way to promote this is not through religion, not through religious faith, but through secularity, based on scientific sort of research, and findings.

3) Then, the third point. As I mentioned earlier, those traditions of India have lots of information about the mind. Within that tradition, I think, in Buddhism, in the basic Buddhism structure, the final result comes through method or practice; method must be realistic, in order to carry realistic method, we must know the reality. Therefore, I divided Buddha Dharma into three parts: science part, ideology of philosophy part, and then practice. As far as Buddhist practice is concerned, it is only for Buddhists, but Buddhist science and Buddhist philosophy is something universal. Therefore, in this field we are discussing with scientists, it is never about Buddhism as a religion. For many decades, whenever we have had discussions, I never touched on next life, or *karma*; these things are our business, not their business. Our common responsibility is how to build a happy society, a healthy world; that's our common responsibility, not talking about next life. In the next life, Buddhists will be taken care of by Buddha; whether people go to hell or to heaven will be taken care of by Jesus Christ.

Firstly, of course, Buddhism came from India to Tibet, and reached Tibet in eighth century, ninth century. I always say proudly that we are the real holders of the real Nalanda tradition—for every important matter about Buddhist concepts, we are already reliant on Nalanda masters, or their quotations or reasons, so we are truly followers of the Nalanda tradition. So that is why I always used to say, we are *chelas* of India, and Indians our *guru*. Our relationship is something like the relation between *guru* and *chela*. Sometimes, I proudly tell my Indian *gurus* that we are not only just a *chela*, but also a quite reliable *chela*. The original home of Buddha Dharma—including Nalanda institution, Vikramashila, and Takshishila—was at that time, of course, also part of Hindustan. However, due to some invasions and other different reasons, these areas almost disappeared. During these many ups and downs in the *guru's* own land, we *chelas*, through centuries, kept intact those Nalanda traditions. That is why we are quite a reliable sort of *chela* or student.

Anyway, eventually from Tibet, Buddhism came to this belt or the Himalayan range. From Ladakh up to Mon, I think every monastery, every *gonpa*, and also those richer families, have *Kangyur*, *Tengyur*, or *Yum*, *Bum*, *Nyintik*, *Gyatongba*, so that means you are follower of those traditions. Likewise in Sikkim.

Since my second or third visit, I told the Governor as well as the Chief Minister at that time, that within the state of Sikkim, there are different believers: Buddhists, Hindus, very few Jains, maybe some Muslims, and some Christians, but state as a whole, is essentially a

Buddhist community. There are so many monasteries and *gonpas* here. Therefore, I think as one important aspect of Sikkim, or one important aspect of Sikkimese identity, Buddhist culture is very important. It is important to keep and to preserve Buddhist culture. When I say culture, Buddhist culture, it relates to the community. For example, in Tibet, in Lhasa, I think that the Muslim community has been there for at least four centuries. But while for these people, these families, the religious faith is Muslim, Islam, their way of life is very much in the spirit of our Buddhist culture. So, when we talk Buddhist culture, it is related to the whole community. Buddhist religion is an individual matter. So, Sikkimese society as a whole, community as a whole, I think Buddhism is really part of your own culture, and realistically, it beneficial to keep the Buddhist culture alive.

I was told, in recent years, you have received lots of money from the Central Government, so you have spent lots of money on buildings. There is the danger of forgetting the inner value and Buddhist culture, so you must make special effort to promote the Buddhist culture, not through prayers but through study, through education. That is the third point I want to make.

I thought it is relevant that this kind of meeting should take place in an area where Buddhist culture has traditionally been there. That's my reason, so I urged him (to organise the conference).

I really appreciate all the concerned people who organised this meeting, I really appreciate it, thank you. Now, these three days of deliberations will be, I think, useful to some people, and open your awareness. So now we will spend a few days here, then we will leave. On 23rd December I am leaving, these professors are also leaving. So, now people, local people, you have the responsibility to carry these ideas, to implement these ideas. It is entirely your own responsibility, entirely dependent on your own actions. Thank you.