



## **Warm Heart Open Mind (4)**

**by**

**His Holiness the Dalai Lama**

*The following is an edited transcript of an address His Holiness the Dalai Lama gave to the International Buddhist Youth Conference in Auckland, New Zealand on 30 May 2002.*

We are now entering the twenty-first century. I think the beginning of this century was not a very happy one. Some tragic situations happened at the very beginning of this century. I believe that these tragic situations did not happen suddenly, but because of the left over influences of the nineteenth century and also especially the twentieth century.

In spite of the tremendous economic development and modern education, health care, and all sorts of new inventions, the new findings of science, still we are human beings, so still in our mind different kinds of emotions are there. So, on top of this modern development, mainly the material aspect, now the time has come to take more care about human emotions. Now suddenly, all the various different religious traditions have an important role, which is to make a new shape or a shift in human emotions. Obviously, all religious traditions are concerned about love, compassion, tolerance, forgiveness, self-discipline, contentment, and so on. These are the methods to reduce negative emotions and to increase, to strengthen the positive emotions. Certainly all the different religious traditions adopt these things in the same way. Among these different traditions Buddhism is certainly one of the very important traditions. I think one unique Buddhist thing is the Buddhist way of thinking; the Buddhist way or approach to our emotions is mainly using human intelligence.

Of course there are many Buddhist traditions, different traditions. I come from the Tibetan Buddhist tradition that is the tradition of *Nalanda* monastery of ancient India. The reason is quite simple. All the texts that we study and learn by heart, all of these major texts were written by scholars or great practitioners of Nalanda. In Nalanda there was an established tradition to study the scriptures of both the Pali as well as Sanskrit traditions. This is the tradition we Tibetans inherited from India. Our lineage came from Nalanda monastery, mainly from the Indian master Santarakshita and later from Atisha Dipamkara. Therefore the Tibetan Buddhist tradition is in actual fact the tradition of Nalanda monastery.

Now, the proper way to change our emotions is not through faith but through reason. I think

generally in the Buddhist tradition one unique thing is to use the maximum means to develop human intelligence, and through that way transform human emotions. Because in Buddhist traditions, especially in the Nalanda tradition, there is an emphasis on the optimal use of human intelligence, the use of logic and reason become important. In the Nalanda tradition the great Buddhist masters of logic were Dignaga and Dharmakirti, the two pillars of Buddhist logic and epistemological tradition. According to many of my Indian friends, both the Buddhists and non-Buddhists alike recognize Dignaga and Dharmakirti's contribution to the fields of logic and epistemology in India.

Often in religious traditions faith is seen as more important than human reason. In fact some of my friends in the religious traditions have told me that they find it difficult to perceive any close relationship between faith and reason. So I think this emphasis on reason in Buddhism is quite unique. So when we stress the importance of human reason it makes our tradition very relevant to the contemporary way of approach, such as science.

Another aspect of Buddhism is, even in one's quest for liberation, one seeks protection from within, not from outside. "Moksha" or liberation means a mental state in which all the negative emotions are eliminated. That is liberation. So the whole focus of Buddhist spiritual practice is essentially to watch one's own mind, our thoughts and emotions. On this basis one tries to enhance the positive emotions and tries to reduce the negative emotions. These negative thoughts and emotions are not only reduced, in fact, they are finally eliminated as well. It is in this respect that the Buddhist concept of interdependent origination is involved. In other words, I am talking about the theory of "anatman" or *no-self* and emptiness, *shunyata*.

Shunyata or emptiness does not mean total nothingness rather it refers to the ultimate nature of reality. This concept of the emptiness of independent existence of things and events share some similarities to certain aspects of modern physics. However, in the Buddhist context, the main objective of cultivating such an understanding is to combat the negative emotions, to bring about a transformation within the world of emotions and thoughts. So within modern science there are several fields where there are areas of convergence between Buddhism and science, such as neurology, where the relationship between the mind and brain is increasingly becoming an important area of research.

Today, as far as I know, there are many scientists, some quite well-known, who are showing deep interest in the Buddhist explanation about the nature of reality, about the nature of mind, about emotions, and so on. Here I'm not saying that Buddhism is a greater religion than others. I'm not saying that. All religions, as I mentioned earlier, all religions have the same potential to serve humanity, to help humanity in different ways. So for some people the Buddhist way of approach is not at all suitable. Then in other cases, for some people, the Buddhist way of approach is much more effective. That's a fact, that's reality. So we cannot

say one religion is better than another, but the Buddhist way and approach is quite sophisticated in terms of philosophical analysis. Therefore, whether you consider it as a form of religion or, as some people do, a kind of science of the mind, for many people Buddhism represents an important spiritual tradition of humanity. Whether or not Buddhism exists in some other planets, we do not know. That's not our business. Our business is with this rich human tradition, which has a long history on this planet, a tradition that has continued and flourished for over more than two thousand five hundred years. Safeguarding this rich tradition is our concern.

Also about preserving Buddhism, we shouldn't just think, this is our tradition so therefore whether it is relevant or not we have to work hard to preserve it. That's not the way. As I mentioned earlier all religious traditions have a role, and I think we should be grateful we can share, to help humanity, to change, to transform human emotions. I'm quite sure this can happen without people changing religions. For example, a Christian can remain a Christian but at the same time adopt some aspects of the Buddhist ways of approach. Among my Christian friends, there are some who are already doing this without losing their faith in the Christian tradition. They adopt some Buddhist techniques or methods to improve their inner spiritual qualities. In fact one of my Christian brothers actually describes me as an excellent fellow Christian (laughter). So it is possible to take that kind of approach.

Then I think one important thing is in regard to non-believers, in some cases people don't believe in any religion and they also can be very anti-religious. That person has the right to remain as an anti-religious person. But at the same time they also need some kind of spirituality, because that enriches their life. Through that they eventually can find some meaningful life, while they still can remain quite anti-religious. If someone thinks only about money, nothing else, then his or her life will not be very meaningful. Eventually that life will become a slave of money. I think those thoughts are only to try and bring happiness for this life. So Buddhism certainly can help these people. Without accepting any religious faith they can learn to become more warm-hearted people by utilising Buddhist spiritual methods. So these I wanted to share with my Buddhist brothers and sisters.

Now the question is "how do we preserve Buddhadharma?" Firstly, I believe that, as a follower of the Buddha, each of us should practice the Buddhadharma sincerely. In my own case, my Buddhist faith does not remain on the outside, but in my heart. I think this is very important. We must sincerely implement the Buddha's teachings in our own personal lives day and night; we must look at the Buddha's teaching seriously. We should relate to the teachings as if they were medicine. Medicine means it has a curative value; it can help us cure our ailments. When we get ill we need some medicine that can cure us. Medicine is not a decorative art nor is it simply for exhibition. Similarly, Buddha's teachings are the medicine for our negative emotions. To benefit from this medicine we have to utilise it. We must recognize its curative

value and relate to it with seriousness.

This is true not only for Buddhists but true also for the followers of all religious traditions. I always share this thought with my colleagues in the other traditions as well. I often remark that whether one accepts a religious faith or not is really a matter of individual choice. However, once we have accepted to be a follower of a particular tradition it is most important to commit ourselves sincerely and seriously to the teachings of the faith tradition. If religion is used for our own financial benefit, if Buddhadharma is being sold for money, for dollars, that's totally a mistake. Nowadays even some Tibetans are doing that as well. In the name of religion they set up a centre and use this to raise money. This is selling the Buddhadharma. That's a mistake; this is not a sharing of true Buddhadharma. These kinds of activities can cause the degeneration of Buddhadharma. They can also become a cause for the loss of people's respect for the tradition. I think this was one of the factors that may have led to the demise of Buddhism in India. We know that Buddhism eventually disappeared from India, its very birthplace. Some of the monks and the monasteries probably became more concerned with wealth than with the actual teaching and practice of Buddhadharma. This may have been a factor in the loss of faith and respect towards Buddhism on the part of the wider public.

Another factor possibly may have been the abuse of *Vajrayana* practice. Although Vajrayana or Buddhist *Tantrayana* was one of the established traditions of Nalanda monastery, if the teaching and practice of this tradition is not undertaken with proper care this can be very dangerous. One problem was that *Tantra* became more public and possibly the behaviour of some of the monks may have become corrupted and degenerated. This too may have gradually led to the loss of faith and respect towards Buddhism on the part of the general public. It is important that we recognize this important fact and learn from history so that we can avert similar threats in future.

So, on our part, once we have accepted the Buddha as our teacher we should be a sincere and an exemplary student of Buddha. If, on the other hand, we become a stupid student of the Buddha, this will be a disgrace not only for ourselves but also to the Buddhadharma as well. Isn't it? Of course the Buddha is always compassionate, he never displays anger, but out of faith and out of respect for Buddha, we ourselves must implement his teachings into practice.

Then in order to practice we need understanding. As I mentioned earlier, Buddhism's unique way of approach is using human intelligence to the maximum. Therefore we need knowledge of the teachings and the Buddha's philosophical insights. So without proper study and without sufficient knowledge we cannot practice the Buddha's teachings in a deep way. Therefore the past Buddhist masters, such as the Nalanda teachers, wrote thousands of different treatises and commentaries on the Buddha's teachings. All of these were written to assist us in our understanding of Buddhadharma. All these great texts written by the great pandits like

Nagarjuna, Aryadeva, Arya Asanga, Vasubhandu, Dignaga, Dharmakirti, Chandrakirti, and Buddhapalita, all these works were composed not for their final examination or something. Rather, they were written in the service of Buddhadharma.

Therefore, I think it is important for us to study, to read these great works. This is true especially for the Buddhist youth, the majority of the audience here who have gathered from all around the world for this Buddhist Youth Forum. A well-known Tibetan lama once said that even for a person who is likely to die tomorrow it is worthwhile to study. As for myself, I am now almost sixty-seven year old. Still, whenever I have the opportunity, I always read Tibetan scriptures. So especially in the case of you, the youth, I would like to ask, "Please spend more time engaged in serious study." This, I think, is an effective and proper way to ensure the preservation of Buddhadharma. Constructing huge temples and, in some cases, constructing giant statues and monuments like *stupas*, of course may be important. If you have time and money this may be okay; but this is not so important. The important thing is to build temples, statues, and monuments like stupas within ourselves. In the meantime since the Buddha himself accepted the diversity of mental dispositions among his own followers and accordingly taught different teachings, I think it is crucial for us as Buddhists to extend this understanding to other faiths and traditions. We must genuinely respect the validity of other faiths and traditions and recognize them as representing different spiritual approaches that are suited to people of diverse spiritual inclinations and mental dispositions. This is all.

Thank you very much.

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