

Thank You India!*

The full text of the printed address of His Holiness the Dalai Lama distributed at the public meeting held at Delhi on the 31st March, 2009 to commemorate the completion of the Tibetan Community's 50-Years of Exile in India.

H.H. The 14th Dalai Lama



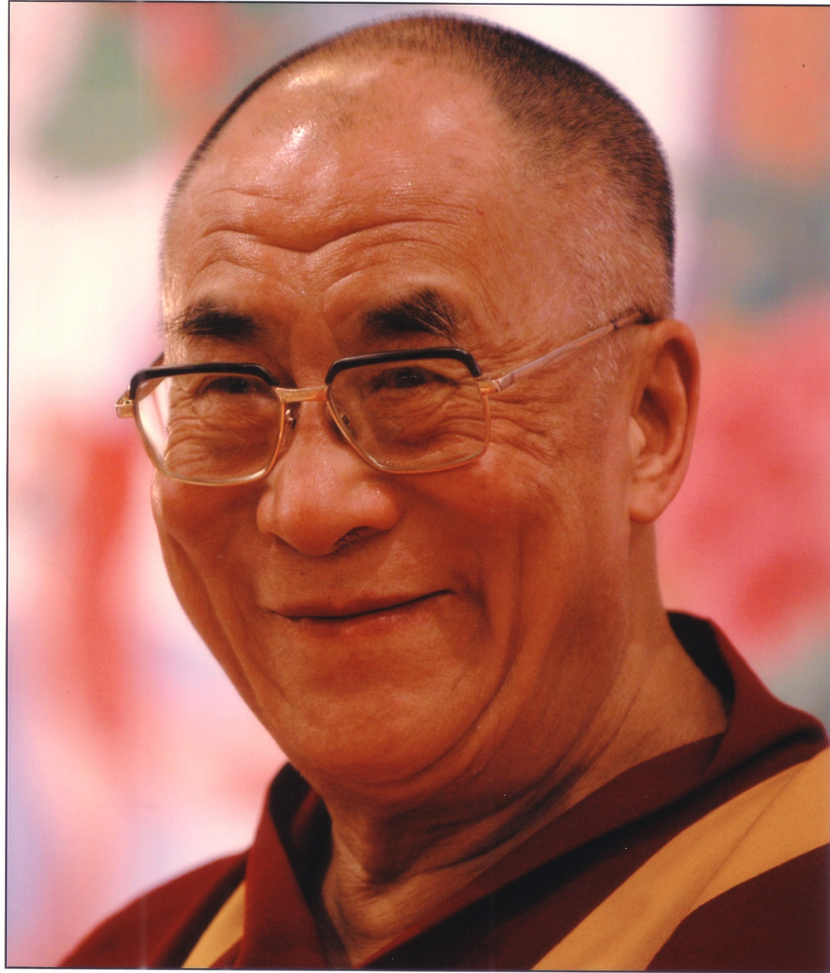
This address is both inspiring in nature and historically important in its scope. The 14th Dalai Lama, the Spiritual Leader of the Tibetan People, over one lakh of whom are living in exile along with him in India for almost half a century now, gave a heart-warming and generously worded address recently, thanking the Indian nation and the people for their hospitality to him and his people. As the Dalai Lama stresses after delving into the past history of Indo-Tibetan relations, “these accounts reflect the indisputably strong ties that have linked Tibetans and Indians in the fields of religion and culture. In a letter to me, the late Morarji Desai stated, ‘India and Tibet are like two branches of the same Bodhi tree.’ I entirely agree, which is why I wholeheartedly describe Indians as our *gurus*, while we Tibetans are *chelas* or students.”

After describing the events leading to his and the Tibetans taking asylum in India en masse, the Dalai Lama again says, “Innumerable Indian individuals have shown great sympathy for Tibetans and have worked actively for the Tibetan cause and the welfare of Tibetans in exile. This reflects the unique Indian tradition of the *guru* showing concern for his *chela*. India’s moral and material generosity to us during this critical period when our very identity and the civilization we derived from India is under severe threat of extinction truly reflects the English proverb which says, ‘A friend in need is a friend indeed.’” Further, “It is a great honour for me to consider India my spiritual home and like a messenger I have tried to promote the key Indian principles of *ahimsa* (non-violence) and *karuna* (compassion) wherever I go.”

All in all a truly inspiring address from a truly great human being.

A.A.





A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'Lama' followed by a flourish.

Author

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Tibet is the snowy-land located beyond the Himalayan ranges to the north of India - the Land of Aryas. Buddha Shakyamuni blessed this land and prophesied the spread of the Buddhadharma there. Mount Kailash and Lake Manasarovar are located there, both of which are considered

sacred by India's major religious traditions. Tibet is the source of the four great rivers that flow into India and finally reach the great oceans. Geographically, it is like the Indian highlands, which many great Indian masters have referred to as the Heaven of Thirty-three, (Trayastrimshadeva). Regarding the date at which the Tibetan race first came about, archaeological findings suggest it was at least ten thousand years ago. The Bon scriptures concur. According to the Bengali scholar Prajna Varma, Tibetans are descendants of Rupati, king of a South Indian kingdom, who escaped to Tibet with his subjects after the Mahabharata War. As for the first King of Tibet, it is believed that around 150 BCE, a prince of Magadha escaped to Tibet after being exiled from his kingdom. Tibetans named him Nya-tri Tsenpo and made him their king. Thus began the Tibetan royal lineage. Whether we consider our geography, ancestry, or our royal dynasty, India and Tibet have long had close ties with each other.

In the 7th and 8th centuries, Tibetan students were sent to India to study. Once they had completed their education, these young Tibetans, such as Thonmi Sambhota, created a Tibetan alphabet on the basis of the Nagari script that improved on the *Shangshung Maryig*, an earlier Tibetan mode of writing and Tibetan grammar based on Sanskrit. This not only contributed to the development of the Tibetan civilization, but also allowed for the dissemination of the Buddhadharma in Tibet. In the 8th century, Shantarakshita, a Bengali prince turned monk and illustrious scholar from Nalanda University, visited Tibet and founded the monastic order there. Guru Padmasambhava from the west of India was responsible for the spread of Tantric Buddhism. Shantarakshita's student Kamalashila also visited Tibet to uphold Buddhism.

It is through the kindness of these masters who established Buddhism in Tibet that numerous teachings of the Buddha such as those concerning the three vehicles and the four classes of tantra, which make up the content of the Three Baskets or Tripitaka, were translated into Tibetan. Besides these, numerous works of the great Indian commentators, such as the seventeen Nalanda masters, Arya Nagarjuna and Arya Asanga among them, were also translated into Tibetan. This helped establish in Tibet the complete and pure tradition of Buddhism that has been fostered in the great Indian Universities at Taxila, Nalanda, Vikramashila, and Odantapuri. Also, because Tibetan scholars constantly referred to the Indian sources and did not corrupt them with their own ideas and

concepts, today it is the Tibetans who have been able to preserve the complete and pure Indian Buddhist tradition, which declined in India.

To begin with, Tibetan scholars such as the translator Thonmi Sambota (7th century CE), translated many texts like the twenty-one tantras of Avalokiteshvara, the *Dharani of the Crown of the Precious Collection*, and the *Hundred Thousand Verse Perfection of Wisdom Sutra*. According to the *History of the Rise of the Dharma* by Buton Rinchen Drub (1290-1364), from the time of the translator trio Kawa Peltseg, Chogro Lui Gyaltzen, Shang Yeshe De in the 8th century until the translator Legpa'i Lodro in the 14th century, there were 192 Tibetan translators and 93 great Indian masters who supervised and approved their work. Altogether there have been about 700 translators.

From the era of Acharya Shantarakshita and Surendrabodhi, that is the late 8th to early 9th centuries until Acharya Belbhadra and his disciples in the 17th century more than 300 volumes were translated into Tibetan from other languages, such as Sanskrit, of which only 10 volumes were translated from Chinese. Many volumes written in Indian languages such as Sanskrit were translated into Tibetan, which now comprise the Kangyur, the translated words of the Buddha and the Tengyur, the translated commentaries of subsequent Indian masters. Today, it is we Tibetans who preserve the complete and the pure Indian Buddhist tradition, which declined in India. Regarding the translation of texts from Indian languages, the greatest number is found in Tibetan and they are considered the most accurate. I think this is because the creation of the Tibetan written language followed a Sanskrit pattern.

Among the many Indian masters who visited Tibet, despite the difficulties of travelling at such high altitudes, in order to teach the Buddhadharmā, some of the most celebrated figures are Pandit Shakyashree, Pandit Smritijnana and Dipamkara Atisha. There are also accounts of thousands of Tibetans visiting India in those days to study Buddhism. Many of them returned to Tibet after completing their studies, but some remained in India. There were cases of Tibetan scholars renowned for their scholarship like the translator Tsami Sangye Drak, who later became abbot of the monastery at Bodhgaya. There were

also instances of Indian masters who escaped to Tibet when their monasteries fell victim to the Turkic invasions.

These accounts reflect the indisputably strong ties that have linked Tibetans and Indians in the fields of religion and culture. In a letter to me, the late Morarji Desai stated, "India and Tibet are like two branches of the same Bodhi tree." I entirely agree, which is why I wholeheartedly describe Indians as our *gurus*, while we Tibetans are *chelas* or students.

Following the decline of Buddhism in India, spiritual and cultural ties and social interaction with Tibet declined too. However, Tibetans continued to go on pilgrimage to the sacred Buddhist sites in India and from the Indian side pilgrims continued to visit Mount Kailash and Lake Manasarovar freely, without a need for passports and visas, until 1959. Trade between the two countries continued along the border from Ladakh in the west to present day Arunachal Pradesh in the east. Tibet reached agreements on important issues with the kingdoms on its borders. There was also a tradition of sending donations for religious purposes to the sacred places in the border areas. In the twentieth century, Mahapandit Rahul Sankrityayan (1893-1963) visited Tibet three times and retrieved many rare Sanskrit texts, which have contributed greatly to the revival of interest in Buddhism in India.

Politically, in 1904, Tibet signed an agreement with British-India. In 1910, the 13th Dalai Lama fled into exile in India. In 1913/14, the Simla treaty was signed (between British India and Tibet), according to which the two sides agreed to review their agreements every ten years. Arrangements were made between Tibet and India to ensure security along their trade routes. Postal services and telegraph lines were established, and an Indian Mission was set up in Lhasa. In March 1947, a few months before India gained independence, representatives of the Tibetan government were invited to an Asian relations conference.

In 1956, Panchen Rinpoche and I, accompanied by other Tibetan lamas, visited independent India when we were invited to attend the 2500th Buddha Jayanti Celebrations. All the Tibetan pilgrims were kindly granted half-fare when they made pilgrimage to the holy Buddhist sites

in India. I myself had the opportunity not only to make pilgrimage to many of the Buddhist and non-Buddhist sacred sites here, but I also saw many industrial developments in India which filled me with fresh inspiration. I also had the chance to meet and receive advice from many prominent Indian leaders. In particular, the then Prime Minister, Pandit Nehru's affectionate guidance was of far reaching benefit to Tibetans.

That year, instead of seeking asylum in India, I decided to return to Tibet. Retrospectively, I am glad to see that this was the correct decision from both a temporal and spiritual point of view. Not only was I able to fulfil many of my spiritual obligations, such as sitting for my final Geshe (doctoral) examinations, but I also left no stone unturned in my efforts to deal with Chinese officials.

Although the local Tibetan government and I made great efforts to ensure that Tibetans and Chinese lived together peacefully on the basis of the Seventeen Point Agreement, they were in vain. The Tibetan people were left with no alternative but finally to launch a peaceful uprising on 10th March, 1959 to oppose Chinese brutality and the situation became much more serious. I tried my best to calm the situation and avert a harsh Chinese response, but failed. Consequently, accompanied by a small party of Tibetan government officials including some Kalons (Cabinet Ministers), I fled to southern Tibet on 17th March. I tried once again to establish contacts with the Chinese authorities from there. However, the situation in Lhasa had worsened on the night of 19th March when Chinese troops resorted to extreme force and more than twenty thousand innocent Tibetans were killed, injured, and imprisoned over a period of twenty-four hours. This left us helpless, with no option but to escape to India. Finally, on 31st March, after many days of hardship, we safely reached India and the light of freedom. As one of the most significant days of my life, it also marked a turning point in the history of the Tibetan people.

Because of the Chinese military's harsh and relentless repression of the Tibetan people and the turmoil that spread throughout Tibet, that same year about one hundred thousand Tibetans fled through NEFA, (present day Arunachal Pradesh) and Bhutan seeking refuge in India. The Indian government was so generous as to have immediately set up refugee

camps for Tibetans at Misamari in Assam and Buxa Duar in Bengal. The generous way in which the Indian government bestowed aid in the form of food, clothing, blankets and medical facilities brought Tibetans tremendous relief. In due course, monks and nuns were provided opportunities to resume their spiritual studies, children were provided with education, the elderly were provided with homes and suitable employment was found for others. In short, because Tibetans' material needs were addressed, we were able to dedicate ourselves to preserving our religion, culture and our very Tibetan identity.

It was due particularly to Pandit Nehru's farsightedness and personal concern that we established Tibetan farming settlements, with the aim that Tibetans could live together in communities without being scattered here and there, and separate schools for Tibetan children where modern education could be given in addition to instruction in our own language, culture and religion. Over the last fifty years, more than one hundred thousand Tibetan refugees have enjoyed social benefits similar to those of their Indian hosts and we have now reached the third generation. We are deeply grateful to the Indian Central and the State governments, who, despite having to deal with their own problems, have wholeheartedly and consistently supported and assisted Tibetans. The friendship and sympathy the Indian people as a whole have shown Tibetans has made us feel this is truly our second home, indeed, wherever Tibetans have had skills and abilities of their own we have been able to exercise them. Overall India has given us the greatest moral and material support. Looking back over the past fifty years, we feel confident that we made the right choice when we sought refuge in India.

Regardless of their own caste, religious or political affiliations, a wide variety of Indians have formed Tibetan support groups such as Indo-Tibet Friendship Society (ITFS), Bharat-Tibet Sahyok Manch and Friends of Tibet. Innumerable Indian individuals have shown great sympathy for Tibetans and have worked actively for the Tibetan cause and the welfare of Tibetans in exile. This reflects the unique Indian tradition of the *guru* showing concern for his *chela*. India's moral and material generosity to us during this critical period when our very identity and the civilization we derived from India is under severe threat of extinction truly reflects the English proverb which says, "A friend in need is a friend indeed."

Considering the differences between Indian and Tibetan languages, habits and social customs, our presence might initially have caused some unease and anxiety. However, in general a genuine harmony and understanding exists between us. This is a great source of strength and satisfaction. It is also a reflection of India's valuable tradition of tolerance and *ahimsa*. The number of Tibetan refugees is small compared to that of other refugee communities in India and yet we have received the most generous recognition and assistance from both the government and the people.

In addition to farming the small plots of land provided by the government of India, Tibetans do petty business during the winter months selling woollen garments in the towns and cities across India. This business is not only an opportunity to earn a livelihood, but is also an opportunity for us to interact with the people of this country and improve our mutual understanding. Although Tibetan refugees have by and large become personally self-sufficient, we are still indebted to the Government of India for its dedicated support of many of our Tibetan schools and other Tibetan cultural institutions.

On a personal level, the freedom I enjoy in exile I owe to India. I am able to practise Buddha Shakyamuni's teachings, on the basis of which I try to make some contribution to the betterment of humanity. The liberty I enjoy in India is truly reflected in the title of my autobiography - *Freedom in Exile*. It is a great honour for me to consider India my spiritual home and like a messenger I have tried to promote the key Indian principles of *ahimsa* (non-violence) and *karuna* (compassion) wherever I go.

As a human being my main commitment is in the promotion of human values such as warm-heartedness that are essential to a happy life. As a religious practitioner, my second commitment is the promotion of inter-religious harmony. My third commitment is of course the issue of Tibet, due on the one hand to my being a Tibetan with the name of 'Dalai Lama', but more importantly due to the trust that Tibetans both inside and outside Tibet have placed in me. The welfare of Tibetans is my daily concern and I consider myself only as someone free to speak on behalf of those Tibetans oppressed by years of Chinese communist rule, who do not enjoy such freedom.

Over the last fifty years, I have received generous, affectionate and personal encouragement on official and personal matters from numerous leaders as well as social workers and intellectuals. They have shown me trust and friendship and offered me valuable advice that I will always cherish. I am unable to name all of them now, but if I may mention just a few, they include C. Rajagopalachari (Rajaji), Dr. Rajendra Prasad, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, Acharya Vinoba Bhave, Jayaprakash Narayan and Acharya Kripalani.

The support and assistance India has given Tibet for more than two thousand years, but particularly over the last fifty years is incalculable. Words are insufficient to repay the debt we owe India. However, on this occasion of the fiftieth year of our living in exile in this country, to show how greatly indebted I feel, let me express my deep gratitude to the people of India and their government through you, my Indian friends who are personally here with us today.

Buddhism spread to Tibet from India around fifteen hundred years ago. Although it then declined in the land of its birth, we were able to preserve it in Tibet as well as helping others benefit from the teachings of the Buddha. We feel we have gone some way towards repaying India's kindness.

We shall be very happy if we are able to contribute to restoring India's rich Buddhist heritage. In order to fulfil this dream, Pandit Nehru established the Sikkim Research Institute of Tibetology, Central Institute of Buddhist Studies, Leh, Ladakh, and the Central University of Tibetan Studies in Varanasi. In these places, initiatives have been taken to translate important texts, whose originals once existed in Indian languages but have since been lost, from Tibetan back into Indian languages such as Sanskrit. This significant project has been both successful and satisfying. As a token of our willingness to restore to India the rich culture we have preserved so far, I would like to tell you that we plan to offer the Indian nation, complete sets of the Kangyur (Tibetan translations of the Buddha's teachings), and Tengyur (Tibetan translations of commentaries by subsequent Indian masters), as well as

63 titles restored from Tibetan into Sanskrit and over 150 translated into Hindi and other languages.

On behalf of all Tibetans, both those inside and those outside Tibet, I fervently wish to express our profound gratitude by saying “Thank you” over and over again to you, the people and Government of India.

At the same time, I would like to recall that our neighbours Bhutan and Nepal share the same religion and culture and have long had close ties with us. Both of these countries have also provided shelter to Tibetan refugees. We are grateful to the people and the governments of these two countries too. Indeed, we also would like to express our gratitude to all the other countries in which Tibetans now live.

With my prayers for the happiness of all beings.

Dalai Lama

31st March 2009.

** Published by the Department of Information and International Relations, Central Tibetan Administration, Dharamsala, India.*



An Inspiring book on Gandhi’s life released in Pakistan*

An inspiring book on the life of Mahatma Gandhi, titled ‘Bahuroopi Gandhi’, was due to be published in SINDHI language in the first week of July, 2009 in Pakistan. The book is authored by Ms. Anu Bandyopadhyaya and translated by Mr. Zaffar Junejo in Sindhi language.

The preface for the Sindhi edition has been written by Mr. Arvind Gupta, a famous science communicator and the most amazing caricatures of Gandhiji done by India’s foremost cartoonist R. K Laxman.

The book portrays many aspects of this great man which remain unknown. How he took interest in so many things and when he got going he did them with extraordinary finesse. He spun khadi and wove sarees for his wife Kasturba on a loom and stitched blouses for her. He was hair-cutter, made leather sandals, washed clothes and cleaned toilets with broom and bucket.

Gandhiji did the most menial tasks with utmost pride. This book has the power to sensitize and change people. He told us that every single individual on earth can make a significant contribution. Gandhiji's message is loud and clear - "Live Simply, so that Others Can Simple Live...."

The book is being composed and it would be published under the banner of TRD's initiative - 'My Life, My Message' and was expected to be out in first week of July, 2009 and its soft copy uploaded for free access and usage.

To read the English version of the book, 'BAHUROOPI GANDHI', click here: <http://mkgandhi.org/bahurupi/bahurupi.htm>

** Source: e-mail from info@mkgandhi.org dated Wed, Jun 3, 2009*

