

# Dalai Lama (Tibet - contemporary)

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## 1) Buddhism

### **Meditation**

Traditionally in India, there is samadhi meditation, "stilling the mind," which is common to all the Indian religions, including Hinduism, Buddhism, and Jainism. And in many of these traditions, certain types of vipasyana and "analytical meditation" are common as well.

It is my belief that if prayer, meditation, and contemplation - which is more discursive and analytic - are combined in daily practice, the effect on the practitioner's mind and heart will be all the greater. One of the major aims and purposes of religious practice for the individual is an inner transformation from an undisciplined, untamed, unfocused state of mind toward one that is disciplined, tamed, and balanced. A person who has perfected the faculty of single-pointedness will definitely have a greater ability to attain this objective. When meditation becomes an important part of your spiritual life, you are able to bring about this inner transformation in a more effective way.

Once this transformation has been achieved, then in following your own spiritual tradition, you will discover that a kind of natural humility will arise in you, allowing you to communicate better with people from other religious traditions and cultural backgrounds. You are in a better position to appreciate the value and preciousness of other traditions because you have seen this value from within your own tradition. People often experience feelings of exclusivity in their religious beliefs - a feeling that one's own path is the only true path - which can create a sense of apprehension about connecting with others of different faiths. I believe the best way to counter that force is to experience the value of one's own path through a meditative life, which will enable one to see the value and preciousness of other traditions.

### **Heart and Intellect**

Why are we able, through the application of such meditative techniques, not only to develop but to enhance compassion? This is because passion is a type of emotion that possesses the potential for development. Generally speaking, we can point to two types of emotion. One is more instinctual and is not based on reason. The other type of emotion - such as compassion or tolerance - is not so instinctual but has a sound base or grounding in reason and experience. When you clearly see the various logical grounds for their development and you develop conviction in these benefits, then these emotions will be enhanced. What we see here is a joining of intellect and heart.

Compassion represents the emotion, or heart, and the application of analytic meditation applies the intellect. So, when you have arrived at that meditative state where compassion is enhanced, you see a special merging of intellect and heart.

If you examine the nature of these meditative states, you will also see that there are different elements within these states. For example, you might be engaged in the analytic process of thinking that we are all creations of the same Creator, and therefore, that we are all truly brothers and sisters. In this case, you are focusing your mind on a particular object. That is, your analytic subjectivity is focusing on the idea or concept that you are analysing. However, once you have arrived at a state of single-pointedness - when you experience that inner transformation, that compassion within you - there is no longer a meditating mind and a meditated object. Instead, your mind is generated in the form of compassion.

## **Consciousness**

I feel that it is, first of all, quite important to understand what we mean by consciousness. The nature of consciousness, or awareness - *shepa* in Tibetan - is such that it is not at all material; it has no material form or shape or colour whatsoever. As such, it is not quantifiable in scientific terms, and it thus does not lend itself to current scientific investigation. Instead of having some material nature, consciousness is by nature "mere experience" or "mere awareness".

When I say, "I know" or "I am aware," there seems to be an agent, "I", who engages in the activity of knowing or being aware; but what we mean by consciousness is that capacity in dependence upon which one knows or is aware. It is, in other words, the activity or process of knowing itself, and as such, it is "mere awareness" or "luminous cognisance". This is because, generally speaking, we associate it with an external object or with a pleasant or unpleasant sensation. That is, whether we are thinking conceptually or simply having a sensory experience, awareness itself arises with the form or appearance of an object, and as a result, we usually do not recognise it as "mere awareness" or "dear, luminous cognisance." In short, in our ordinary experience consciousness becomes caught up with the dualistic appearances of "object" and "subject".

So we could say that we only experience consciousness as coloured by the object; the perception is almost inseparable from the object. We know that when we have a perception of a blue object, it is almost as if the perception itself is blue. However, it is possible to bring about an experience of this essential nature of consciousness - this mere luminosity, this mere experience, this mere knowingness, or cognisance, I spoke of - by consciously trying to empty the mind of its various patterns, concepts, memories, and, most importantly, preoccupations with sensory experiences. So while maintaining a profound alertness, if you are able to put a stop to this turbulence within the mind - the conceptual thought processes and thought patterns chasing after sensory experiences - you can begin to perceive the deeper level. If you are totally withdrawn, that does not help in this process. You must maintain an alertness and gradually stop the fluctuations of thought and sensory experiences within your mind. Then it is possible to have a glimpse of the nature of the mind. Initially, when you first

experience this nature, you experience it as only a type of vacuity. But it is possible, through practice, to extend that period. Slowly, as you progress in your meditation, you are able to extend the duration of the experience. And then the nature of mind, this clarity and cognisance, will become more and more apparent. This is how it is possible to recognise the nature of consciousness in contrast to the consciousness that is linked to physical reality.

## **Compassion**

If you look at compassion that is mixed with attachment, no matter how intense and strong that mixed emotion may be, you will realise that it is based on your projection of certain positive qualities onto the object of your compassion - whether the object is a close friend, a family member, or whomever. Depending upon your changing attitudes toward that object, your emotional feelings will also change. For example, in a relationship with a friend, suddenly one day you may no longer be able to see in that person the good qualities that you had previously perceived, and this new attitude would immediately affect your feelings toward that person. Genuine compassion, on the other hand, springs from a clear recognition of the experience of suffering on the part of the object of compassion, and from the realisation that - this creature is worthy of compassion and affection. Any compassionate feeling that arises from these two realisations cannot be swayed - no matter how that object of compassion reacts against you. Even if the object reacts in a very negative way, this won't have the power to influence your compassion. Your compassion will remain the same or become even more powerful.

If you carefully examine the nature of compassion, you will also find that genuine compassion can be extended even to one's enemies, those whom you consider to be hostile toward you. In contrast, compassion mixed with attachment cannot be extended to someone whom you consider to be your enemy. Conventionally speaking, we define an enemy as someone who either directly harms or hurts us, or someone who is motivated to or has the intention to harm or hurt us. The realisation that such a person is fully intent on hurting and harming you cannot give rise to a feeling of closeness and empathy as long as such feelings require an attachment to the person. However, this realisation that another person wishes to harm and hurt you cannot undermine genuine compassion - a compassion based on the clear recognition of that person as someone who is suffering, someone who has the natural and instinctual desire to seek happiness and overcome suffering, just as oneself. In the Christian spiritual context, this could be extended by thinking along the following lines: just as myself, this enemy shares the same divine nature and is a creation of the divine force. So on these grounds, that person is worthy of my compassion and a feeling of closeness toward him or her. This kind of compassion or feeling of empathy is genuine compassion free from attachment.

The last sentence of this Gospel passage states that "Whoever does the will of God is my brother and sister and mother." According to the literal reading, it seems to give a sense of partiality, a discrimination based on a condition: only those who obey the will of God are my brothers and my sisters and my mother. However, in the Christian context, I think you can approach this passage in a more interpretative way by

extending the meaning. Although in literal terms it says that "whoever obeys the will of God are my brothers and sisters and mother," it could also imply that all those who share the divine nature, who have the the capacity or potential to follow the will of God, are also my mother and brothers and sisters. This would include or embrace the whole of humanity and underline the unity and equality of all human beings.

In this context, I would like to point out a particular element in the practice of the bodhisattva path that might be suitable for a Christian to practice. There is a special category of teachings and practices known as *lo jong*: thought transformation, or mind training. There is a special way of reflecting upon the kindness of all sentient beings, in this context all human beings, that is described in some of the literature. For example, we can easily perceive the kindness of someone who is directly involved in our life and our upbringing. But if you examine the nature of your existence, including your physical survival, you will find that all the factors that contribute to your existence and well-being - such as food, shelter, and even fame - come into being only through the cooperation of other people.

This is especially true in the case of someone who lives an urban life. Almost every aspect of your life is heavily dependent upon others. For example, if there is an electricians' strike for even just one day, your whole city comes to a halt. This heavy interdependency upon others' co-operation is so obvious that no one needs to point it out. This is also true of your food and shelter. You need the direct or indirect co-operation of many people to make these necessities available. Even for such an ephemeral phenomenon as fame you need others. If you live alone in a mountainous wilderness, the only thing close to fame that you could create would be an echo! Without other people, there is no possibility of creating fame. So in almost every aspect of your life there is the participation and involvement of other people.

If you think along these lines, you will begin to recognise the kindness of all others. And if you are a spiritual practitioner, you will also be aware that all of the major spiritual traditions of the world recognise the preciousness of altruism and compassion. If you examine this precious mind or emotion of altruism, of compassion, you will see that you need an object to generate even this feeling. And that object is a fellow human being. From this point of view, that very precious state of mind, compassion, is impossible without the presence of others. Every aspect of your life - your religious practice, your spiritual growth, even your basic survival - is impossible without others. When you think along such lines, you will find sufficient grounds to feel connected with others, to feel the need to repay their kindness.

In light of these convictions, it becomes impossible to believe that some people are totally irrelevant to your life or that you can afford to adopt an indifferent attitude toward them. There are no human beings who are irrelevant to your life.

## **Interdependence**

In Buddhism, especially in Madhyamaka Buddhism, the principle of interdependence is understood in three ways. The first is in terms of cause and effect. In this case, interdependence is linear: certain causes and conditions bring about certain results. This interdependence of causes and conditions is common to all Buddhist schools. There is a second level of understanding in which interdependence is understood more in terms of mutual dependence, in which the existence of certain phenomena is mutually dependent upon other phenomena. There is a kind of interconnectedness. This is very clearly reflected in the idea of "whole" and "parts." Without parts there cannot be a whole; without a whole there cannot be parts. There is a mutual dependence. A third understanding of the principle of interdependence is more in terms of identity: the identity of a particular event or object is dependent upon its context or its environment. In some sense identity is regarded as emergent: it is not absolute, it is relative. Certain things and events possess identity in relation to other things and events. These are the three levels, or three different ways, in which the principle of interdependence is understood.

## **Love Your Enemy**

If you can cultivate the right attitude, your enemies are your best spiritual teachers because their presence provides you with the opportunity to enhance and develop tolerance, patience, and understanding. By developing greater tolerance and patience, it will be easier for you to develop your capacity for compassion and, through that, altruism. So even for the practice of your own spiritual path, the presence of an enemy is crucial.

## **2) Differences, complementarity and dialogue**

### **Need for differences**

In order to develop a genuine spirit of harmony from a sound foundation of knowledge, I believe it is very important to know the fundamental differences between religious traditions. And it is possible to understand the fundamental differences, but at the same time recognise the value and potential of each religious tradition. In this way, a person may develop a balanced and harmonious perception. Some people believe that the most reasonable way to attain harmony and solve problems relating to religious intolerance is to establish one universal religion for everyone. However, I have always felt that we should have different religious traditions because human beings possess so many different mental dispositions: one religion simply cannot satisfy the needs of such a variety of people. If we try to unify the faiths of the world into one religion, we will also lose many of the qualities and richnesses of each particular tradition. Therefore, I feel it is better, in spite of the many quarrels in the name of religion, to maintain a variety of religious traditions.

Unfortunately, while a diversity of religious traditions is more suited to serve the needs of the diverse mental dispositions among humanity, this diversity naturally possesses the potential for conflict and disagreement as well. Consequently, people of every religious tradition must make an extra effort to try to transcend intolerance and misunderstanding and seek harmony.

## **Love, Love, Love**

on a visit to the great monastery at Montserrat in Spain, I met a Benedictine monk there. He came especially to see me - and his English was much poorer than mine, so I felt more courage to speak to him. After lunch, we spent some time alone, face to face, and I was informed that this monk had spent a few years in the mountains just behind the monastery. I asked him what kind of contemplation he had practised during those years of solitude. His answer was simple: "Love, love, love." How wonderful! I suppose that sometimes he also slept. But during all those years he meditated simply on love. And he was not meditating on just the word. When I looked into his eyes, I saw evidence of profound spirituality and love - as I had during my meetings with Thomas Merton. These two encounters have helped me develop a genuine reverence for the Christian tradition and its capacity to create people of such goodness. I believe the purpose of all major religious traditions is not to construct big temples on the outside, but to create temples of goodness and compassion inside, in our hearts.