

# Hope for the Future

A talk given by the Dalai Lama at the Theosophical Society, Wheaton, Illinois,  
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I will speak this evening on my usual topic—that is, about the importance of kindness and compassion. When I speak about this, I regard myself not as a Buddhist, not as the Dalai Lama, not as a Tibetan, but rather as one human being. And, I hope that you in the audience will, at this moment, think of yourselves as human beings rather than as Americans, or Westerners, or members of the Theosophical Society. These things are secondary. If from my side and from the listeners' side we interact as human beings, we will reach the basic level. If I say, "I am a monk," or "I am a Buddhist," these are in comparison to my nature as a human being, temporary. To be a human is basic. Once you are born as a human being, that cannot change until death. Other things – educated or uneducated, rich or poor – are secondary.

At the present time we face many problems. Some are created essentially by ourselves based on divisions due to ideology, religion, race, economic status, or other factors. Therefore, the time has come when we should think on a deeper level, on the human level, and from that level we should appreciate and respect the sameness of others as human beings. We must build a closer relationship of mutual trust, understanding, respect and help, irrespective of differences of culture, philosophy, religion, or faith.

After all, all human beings are the same – made of human flesh, bones, and blood. Also the internal feelings, the wish for happiness and not wishing for suffering are the same. Further, we all have an equal right to be happy. In other words, it is important to realize our sameness as human beings. We all belong to one human family. That we quarrel with each other is due to secondary reasons, and all of this arguing with each other, cheating each other, suppressing each other is of no use.

Unfortunately, for many centuries, bad human beings have used all sorts of methods to suppress and hurt others. Many terrible things have been done. It has meant more problems, more suffering, and more mistrust, resulting in more feelings of hatred and more divisions.

As I say again and again, the world is becoming smaller and smaller. Economically, and from many other viewpoints, the different areas of the world are becoming much closer and more heavily interdependent. Because of this, international summit meetings often take place; problems in one remote place are connected with other global crises. This situation expresses the fact that it is time, it is necessary, to think more on a human level rather than on the basis of the matters that divide us. Therefore, I am speaking to you as just a human being, and I earnestly hope that you also are listening with the thoughts, "I am a human being, and I am here listening to another human being."

All of us want happiness. In big cities, on farms, in remote places, throughout the countryside, people are busy and active. What is the main purpose? Everyone is trying to create happiness. To do so is right. However, it is very important to follow a right method in seeking happiness. We must keep in mind that too much involvement on a superficial level will not solve the larger problems.

There are all about us many crises, many fears. Through highly developed science and technology, we have reached an advanced level of material progress that is both useful and necessary. Yet, if you compare the external progress to our internal progress, it is quite clear that our internal progress is inadequate. In many countries, crises – murdering, killing, and terrorism – are chronic. People complain about the decline in morality and the rise in criminal activity. Although in external matters we are highly developed and are still progressing, at the same time it is equally important to develop and progress in terms of inner development.

In ancient times, if there was war, the effect – the amount of destruction – was limited. Today, however, because of external material progress, it is beyond imagination. Last year I visited Hiroshima. Though I knew something about the nuclear explosion there, it was a very different matter physically to visit the place, to see it with my own eyes, and to meet with people who actually suffered at that moment. I was very moved. A terrible weapon was used. Though we might regard someone as an enemy, on a deeper level an enemy is also a human being, also wants happiness, and has the right to be happy. Looking at Hiroshima and thinking about this, at that moment I became even more convinced that anger and hatred cannot solve problems.

Anger cannot be overcome by anger. If a person shows anger to you, and you also show anger, the result is disastrous. In contrast, if you control anger and show opposite attitudes – compassion, tolerance, and patience – then not only do you yourself remain in peace, but the other's anger will gradually diminish.

World problems similarly cannot be challenged by anger or hatred. Rather, they must be faced with compassion, love, and true kindness. Look at all the terrible weapons there are. Yet, the weapons themselves cannot start a war. The button to trigger them is under a human finger, which moves by thought, not under its own power. The responsibility rests in our thought.

The leaders of the great nations are talking about arms limitation and about nuclear disarmament. This is marvelous. But how is armament to be controlled? First there must be inner control; only then will real control come. Without this, even if you produce a large document with a big pen, it will not last long. If someone wants to destroy it, he can do so within seconds.

If you look deeply into all such things, the blueprint is found within – in the mind – out of which actions come. Thus, first controlling the mind is very important. I am not talking here about controlling the mind in the sense of deep meditation, but just about less anger, more respect for others' rights, more concern for other people, more clear realization of our sameness as human beings. Take the Western view of the Eastern bloc – for instance, of the Soviet Union. You must look at the Soviet Union as brothers and sisters; the people of Russia are the same as yourselves. The Russians also should look on this side as brothers and sisters. This attitude may not solve problems immediately, but we have to make the attempt, propagating this realization through magazines and through television. Rather than just advertising for money, money, money, we need something meaningful, something seriously directed towards the welfare of humankind. Not money alone. Money is necessary, but the actual purpose of money is for human beings. Sometimes we lose interest in human beings and are just concerned about money. This is not sensible.

We should spread this idea using all available media. It is not an attempt to propagate religion or a particular faith. After all, we all want happiness, and no one will argue with the fact that with anger, peace is impossible. With kindness and love, peace of mind can be achieved. No one wants anger, no one wants mental unrest, yet because of ignorance, they occur. Bad attitudes, such as depression, arise from the power of ignorance, not of their own accord.

Through anger we lose one of the best human qualities – the power of judgement. We have a good brain, which other mammals do not have, allowing us to judge what is right and what is wrong, not only in terms of today's concerns, but considering ten, twenty, or even a hundred years. Without any precognition, we can use our normal common sense to determine if something is a right or wrong method; we can decide that if we do such and such, it will lead to such and such an effect. However, once our mind is occupied by anger, we lose this power of judgement, and once lost, it is very sad. Physically you are a human being, but mentally you are incomplete. Given that we have this physical human form, we must safeguard our mental capacity for judgement. For that, we cannot take out insurance; the insurance company is within; self-discipline, self-awareness, and clear realization of the defects of anger and the positive effects of kindness. Thinking about this again and again, we can become convinced of it, and then with self-awareness, can control the mind.

For instance, at present you may be a person who gets quickly and easily irritated by small things. With clear understanding and awareness, this can be controlled. If you usually remain angry for ten minutes, try to reduce it to eight. Next week make it five minutes and the next month two. Then make it zero. That is how to develop and train our minds.

This is my feeling and also the sort of practice I myself do. It is quite clear that everyone needs peace of mind. The question, then, is how to achieve it. Through anger we cannot; through kindness, through love, through compassion, we can achieve one individual's peace of mind. The result of this is a peaceful family – no quarrels between husband and wife; you and children will be happy; no worry about divorce. Extended to the national level, it can bring unity, harmony, and cooperation with genuine motivation. On the international level, we need mutual trust, mutual respect, frank and friendly discussion with sincere motivation, and joint effort to solve world problems. All these are possible.

First we must change within ourselves. Our national leaders try their best to solve our problems, but when one problem is solved here, another one crops up; trying to solve that, again there is another somewhere else. The time has come to try from another angle. Of course it is very difficult to achieve such a worldwide movement for peace of mind, but it is the only alternative. If there were another method that was more practical and easier, it would be better, but there is none. If through weapons we could achieve real lasting peace, all right. Let all factories be turned into weapon factories. Spend every dollar for that – if we achieve definite lasting peace. But this is impossible.

Weapons do not remain quiet. Once a weapon is developed, sooner or later someone will use it. Someone might feel that if you do not use it, then millions of dollars are wasted, so somehow you should use it – drop a bomb to try it out. The result is that innocent people get killed. A friend of mine told me that in Beirut there is a businessman dealing in weapons solely thinking to make money. Because of him, more of the poor people in the streets get killed every day – ten or fifteen, or a hundred. This is due to a lack of human understanding, a lack of mutual respect and trust, to not acting on a basis of kindness and love.

Therefore, making this sort of attempt at world peace through internal transformation is difficult but is the only way to achieve lasting world peace. Even if during my own lifetime it is not achieved, it is all right. More human beings will come, the next generation and the one after that, and progress can continue. I feel that despite the practical difficulties and the sense that this is almost an unrealistic view, it is worthwhile to make the attempt. Therefore, wherever I go, I express these things. I am encouraged that people from different walks of life generally receive it well.

Each of us has responsibility for all humankind. 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 benefit of all humanity.

Also, if you try to subdue your selfish motives – anger, and so forth – and develop more kindness and compassion for other, ultimately you yourself will benefit more than you would otherwise. So sometimes I say that the wise selfish person should practice this way. Foolish selfish people are always thinking of themselves, and the result is negative. Wise selfish people think of others, help others as much as they can, and the result is that they too receive benefit.

This is my simple religion. There is no need for temples; no need for complicated philosophy. Our own brain, our own heart is our temple; the philosophy is kindness.