



The Path to Peace—The Buddhist Way

By Lakha Lama (September 2002)



Photo: Robert V. Ruggiero

In Buddhist philosophy, our age is described as the time of catastrophes. The explanation, according to the ancient Buddhist scriptures, is that the human mind at this time is dominated by unlimited desire, which leads to aggression and hatred. This leads to ignorance of global harmony. In Buddhist philosophy, desire, aggression and ignorance are called The Three Root Poisons.

It is my view that most of the world's leading politicians base their policies on unlimited desire, not on ethics and morality.

When we do not limit our desires by appreciating our lives and what we have, the result is a constant sense of needing more.

We create a lot of technical aids, many of which help society, but some technological developments aim to destroy human harmony and nature. Most nations spend a lot of money on weapons. The question is: What do we achieve by force of arms? The need for weapons is based on anxiety; it is not based on true human power.

Instead, you could expend similar resources on building friendships with other nations. Then you would not need such huge armed forces to threaten each other. Sharing and exchanging with others will make your country rich. I believe it is the only viable option.

Threats

Threats are a tool used to oppress other people or nations and make them bow to the power behind. They create hatred and anger and that leads the other party to become obsessed with the idea of taking revenge, directly or indirectly. This kind of process takes place in the mind and cannot be suppressed with weapons.

Those who threaten others may themselves feel that they are superior and powerful, but at the same time they are dominated by many forms of anxiety and speculation. When you use force to threaten others, you push others into using the same methods. When you see others building up their power, you feel threatened. There is no peace circulating in this process.

When the human mind is dominated by hatred and aggression, the focus, whether visible or invisible, is on taking revenge. It is called terror and has many levels. On an ordinary level, for example, parents can threaten their child and try to dominate it. This creates hatred and aggression towards the parents and the child can end up terrorizing them. It does not always involve a physical act, but can be more a form of psychological terror between the parties.

Threats from the outside can be perceived in different ways. It is my impression that in the West people see threats from outside as affecting the nation, democracy and personal freedom. In the East, there is a slightly different view. In Tibet, where I come from, we feel that the threat from China is primarily directed at our cultural identity and religion. The Tibetan name for the Chinese Communists is: "*Den-da*" = "*enemy of the religion*".

The Communists perceive religion and culture as a threat and try to undermine the values this represents. Therefore, they destroy many religious institutions, writings and artefacts, and forbid religious practice. Monasteries, ancient scriptures and symbols have all been destroyed. Mao Tse-tung said directly to H.H. Dalai Lama: "Religion is poison."

But for the Tibetan people, religion is the most important food for their spiritual life and cultural identity. What the Chinese called a "liberation" was an invasion and threat for the Tibetans. The Chinese Maoists ignored the Tibetan people's wish to preserve their culture and religion, and imposed a new regime in Tibet, using force and violence.

I believe that people in the Middle East see their religion and culture as essential and perceive this as being threatened from outside. When a people feel their deepest values in life are being threatened, they will rally against the threat. The Tibetan people have, thanks to their Buddhist faith and H.H. Dalai Lama's efforts, managed to resist the occupying power without resorting to violence, but non-violent resistance is unfortunately not so common in the world. For many people, their cultural identity is more valuable than their lives, which many are willing to sacrifice if they feel their deepest cultural and religious values are threatened.

In the old days, in a time of war, human capacity was used to win over an enemy by confrontation, man to man. Of course, there were many casualties and much destruction on the battlefield. Nowadays, warfare has become more technical and mechanical. First one produces the

equipment of war to protect one's own nation, but later this development is used to threaten other nations. This, in turn, causes other nations to increase the development of their own war equipment to confront the threat. There seems to be more confidence in technical facilities than in human strength and courage. The threat posed by technological weapons is directed not only at leaders and military targets, but also, and far more, at innocent civilian populations. Nowadays, the threat of conflict is not confined to war zones, but creates anxiety throughout the world.

I believe at least 90% of the world's population want to live peaceful lives without war and have the opportunity to manage their own lives. Living in a war environment is worse than experiencing natural disasters. War destroys people's lives and possessions, and especially it destroys the hope and joy of everyday life.

The question is: What do you achieve by war? Even if one physically kills an enemy, heavy feelings of hatred and aggression remain in the environment and spread to other people, leading to endless conflict and war.

The True Human Power

Worldly power is based on money, weapons and alliances. It is rare to see true human power. Jesus, Buddha and Gandhi had true human power and dignity. They had a true understanding of human needs and did not depend on material support and powerful allies; their power was based on non-violence connected directly to the heart. They had much to share and nothing to lose.

I see H.H. Dalai Lama as a true human leader, taking the initiative to create peace in his own community and the outside world with his deep philosophy of non-violence. In my opinion, his human dignity is not based on power and possessions. As he says, "I am a simple Buddhist monk." And I have seen for myself that he lives very simply.

H.H. Dalai Lama does his best to avoid man-made disasters that disturb human harmony, so he is focused on resolving disagreements through dialogue. Although the Tibetan case has been a very complicated situation for half a century, The Dalai Lama has never abandoned the possibility of dialogue with the Chinese authorities. If he was violent, I'm sure he could have used his capacity and position to create a lot of terror.

In the 1960s, a Tibetan guerrilla organization, based in Mustang in Nepal and supported by the CIA, terrorized the Chinese in Tibet. But in the late 1960s, despite the opposition of many Tibetans, H.H. Dalai Lama made a firm decision to disband the guerrillas. Although there was much hatred among the Tibetans for the Chinese, H.H. Dalai Lama refused to use terrorism and violence to find solutions for Tibet. During that period, I myself was a Member of Parliament for the Tibetan government-in-exile, so I can testify that any kind of violence was vetoed by the official Tibetan side. I firmly believe that non-violence is much more powerful than violence.

Ignorance

We need leaders in the world like H.H. Dalai Lama, so that we do not become ignorant of human harmony. We are very aware of politics, economics and technological development, but often then ignore the deeper human harmony and the nature around us. When you "have dollars in your eyes" you do not see the beauty and value of a tree in nature, but only its commercial value

as timber. We look at the earth's other resources in the same way. This creates a disharmonious relationship between human society and nature. We lose the balance between the value of money and human harmony, because money has come to have more value than anything else. Ignorance comes from unlimited desire that makes us see only what we ourselves need and makes us blind to what we are destroying. One's own needs seem more significant, so one chooses to ignore the consequences.

Balance

The human body needs balance between the elements. To maintain that balance, the mind must also be in balance. This has a lot to do with the balance between desire and satisfaction.

In nature, the mutual balance of the elements is very important. Our technological development has created pollution that makes it difficult for nature to maintain balance. That causes environmental disasters. Such disasters create terrible suffering for many people, but also for other beings in nature. Microorganisms, insects, birds and animals each have their important function in maintaining the balance of nature.

If we continue to be ignorant about pollution, it is possible that in the future there will also be disasters in connection with oil extraction. I feel that there is a great risk that the next generation will be confronted by many unnecessary disasters.

Dialogue

When we talk about dialogue, we often focus on external dialogue between people, leaders or nations. But there are other forms of dialogue. An important dialogue is the one we have with ourselves. We must enter into inner dialogue to become aware of what we ourselves are causing.

It is a good idea to strive for clarity to see how much one's words and actions benefit or harm. How many enemies and how many friends do you make? When we have inner dialogue, we achieve higher levels of ethics and morality. It provides fertile ground for a more constructive dialogue with others, based on understanding. This way you can avoid being 100% focused on what you get yourself. There will be balance between what one can get and what one can give.

The truth is that we humans need each other to achieve more harmony in the world. The Eastern and the Southern need the Western and the Nordic countries, and vice versa.

The purpose of dialogue is first to understand each other, and then to find a point that both parties can agree on. That kind of dialogue brings a satisfactory result.

To achieve the goal, it is more important to be able to share than use force. The Berlin Wall fell as a result of dialogue, not war. Through dialogue, a small mouse can rescue a large elephant. If the elephant is caught in a net, the mouse can gnaw the net. One should not underestimate one's ability to help create constructive dialogue worldwide, even if one is a small nation.

True peace in the world will never be achieved by war and threats. The only way to achieve peace is through deep dialogue and willingness to share.

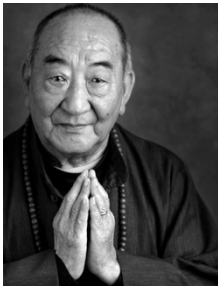
The Buddhist Philosophy of Life

Buddhism does not aim to get more people to become Buddhists. Buddhist philosophy is simply a tool for developing inner values and harmony.

My personal experience was that at the age of seven I had to flee without my parents from Eastern Tibet to Central Tibet due to the Chinese invasion. I never saw my parents again. In 1959, China also invaded Central Tibet, and at the age of 17 I fled to India. I came into a foreign culture with a different language and mentality. In 1963 I was stricken with four life-threatening diseases at the same time: malaria, tuberculosis, meningitis and blood poisoning. Later I got a herniated disc. I was on the verge of death.

Throughout my life, I have never felt misery or self-pity, even though I went through many hard experiences. I maintained my inner harmony. I was able to take on life's challenges in a relaxed way and appreciate my inner human value. Thereby I have been able to attain peace of mind despite external circumstances. That is the gift I received from the Buddhist philosophy that teaches us to let go of the past, live in the present, and create a better future.

I wish for all peace-loving people to be united in the desire for peace. There is a need for a united effort in the world.



Lakha Lama, born Thupten Dorjee in Tibet in 1942, was appointed as a spiritual leader for around 100,000 inhabitants in eastern Tibet at the age of five. In 1959 he fled to India as a refugee and then came to Denmark in 1976, where he settled and started a family.

Based on basic human needs, Lakha Lama shares the Dharma and its message in a unique and simple way that makes the philosophy and methods accessible to all.

Lakha Lama's many humanistic and cross-cultural activities have attracted thousands of followers within Scandinavia and throughout the world. One Swedish follower commented: "*Lakha Lama is to Scandinavia and many Tibetans what the H. H. Dalai Lama is to the world.*"

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