

The Dalai Lama's Call for a More Compassionate World

Posted on August 7th, 2008 by Adrienne Papp



The Dalai Lama in Aspen, July 2008

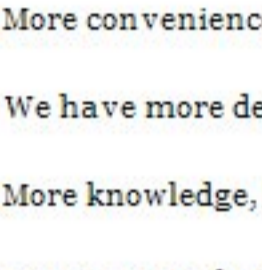
Being in the presence of his Holiness, the Dalai Lama is a once in a lifetime experience. A deep sense of joy and peace overcomes even the most restless of souls. In a two-day symposium hosted by the **Aspen Institute** in collaboration with **The Conservancy for Tibetan Art and Culture** in Aspen, CO on July 25 - 26th, the Dalai Lama addressed some of the most important issues in our lives.

While he is the most recognized spiritual leader of our times he calls himself "just a Buddhist Monk."

In our Western culture - and with the electronic revolution bringing us further and further away from traditional values - such humbleness is almost inconceivable. Did we go too far in our quest for "comfort" at the price of human values? Did the almighty high-tech backfire in ways we do not want to admit, much less can understand?

The answer lies within us, but that is a tough one to crack. Avoidance is a much more comfortable venue to take, at least in the short term.

But, the Dalai Lama is not about finding shortcuts, or quick fixes. Although he laughs with the innocence of a child and tells jokes with a refreshing sense of humor, his life-long commitment to the advocacy of human values and the betterment of conditions is a gift to mankind. He puts the light on our true nature, and mastering our relationships both with others and ourselves, which is our only ticket into the new millennium.



His Holiness describes the paradox of our age rather factually, reminding us that what we already sense deep inside may just be the truth:

"We have bigger houses, but smaller families;

More conveniences, but less time;

We have more degrees, but less sense;

More knowledge, but less judgment;

More experts, but more problems;

More medicines, but less healthiness;

We've been all the way to the Moon and back, but have trouble crossing the street to meet the new neighbor.

We build more computers to hold more information to produce more copies than ever, but have less communication;

We have become long on quantity, but short on quality.

These are times of fast foods, but slow digestion;

Tall man, but short character;

Steep profits, but shallow relationships.

It's a time when there is much in the window, but nothing in the room."

Looking at the teachings of the Dalai Lama as a mere religion is a mistake. There are many religions and beliefs, all of which have their own institution and set of principles. But, there is only ONE World. And, although human nature is complicated, it boils down to a few basic patterns apparent in all of us regardless of religion. These basics will then serve as a soil from which branches into a million different directions, depending on circumstances, convictions, ideas, love, hate, ego, revenge and a myriad of other human emotions, all of which will then create its own outcome through the basic principle of cause and effect.

Luckily, in our numbers-driven age hard-core scientific evidence is coming to the rescue helping us better understand the Dalai Lama's teachings. We are now finding that our emotions, - although often left out of the equation, - influence our physical existence and health as biofeedback between the two states are acting simultaneously. Once we're informed, we can understand that we really have the power, proven in both science and spirituality, to overcome our limitations and change our way of thinking thus improve our general well being through a better understanding of cause and effect.

"The Dalai Lama is my spiritual leader, but also the spiritual leader of the world in opposition to religious leadership, which causes division, war, hatred and terrorism," said **Dr. Eric Fugier** who practices dentistry in Beverly Hills and reads all books written by his Holiness. "Through him I have become a better person, and a better dentist. I became more compassionate toward my patients, my staff, friends and enemies.

I also understood why you have to be compassionate towards the people who try to hurt you: they are ignorant, and you have to be sorry for them and try to help them understand better."

Dr. Fugier, a very successful practitioner treating Hollywood dignitaries, is just one of the many millions whose lives have dramatically changed after gaining full insight into the teachings of the Dalai Lama. Lots of celebrities, including **Richard Gere, Sharon Stone, Goldie Hawn, Martin Scorsese (Kundun), Bernardo Bertolucci (Little Buddha) and Keanu Reeves** are avid supporters of his Buddhist principles.

Planetary warming, war, arrogance, economic recession and other factors are all calling for a Global resolution to save our planet, and our lives on it. But, with old and outmoded systems our survival is impossible.

Pride being the source of suffering, toward the end of his two-day appearance the Dalai Lama returned to the theme of his life long teaching: compassion. "Some very wealthy individuals come to me for my blessings for a happier life. They do not need my blessings. They can give some of their fortune to facilitate education." By which His Holiness meant, the spreading of information, which then can enable each person to obtain happiness from within. "...that way, by giving back, the person who gives will also become happy. That is the real source of blessings"

Prior to his appearance at the Aspen Institute the Dalai Lama had attended a brain science conference in Washington. With an emphasis on the importance of combining scientific data and metaphysics in order to better understand human behavior, he is preparing us for the next step into our modern 21st century world.

The Dalai Lama believes that compassion exists on both emotional and physical levels.

"According to science [practicing compassion] makes the body better and the immune system stronger. So many people spend their money on medicine and sleeping pills. People that have compassion don't need these."

With a lot of scientific evidence directly linking the mind to physical well-being, the Dalai Lama has become seriously interested in the connection between Buddhism and science in recent years, taking a strong position in favor of science. He has even announced that if certain Buddhist principles are proven unsound by scientific evidence, then they should be discarded in favor of proven principles.

The Dalai Lama's beliefs in the science of compassion have been supported by many experts in the field. "Project Compassion," a presentation by a professor from Stanford University that was discussed at the Aspen Institute during the week, is a study in which scientists have been able to measure the relationship between a compassionate mind and the positive physical effects it can have on the human body.

Madeleine Albright, former US Secretary of State, said in a private conversation, "I am planning to help the work of the Dalai Lama."

His Holiness certainly represents a cause that is beyond politics and strategies, but rather is about mankind.

Aspen, which has its own fame through the many natural wonders it has to offer, is often home to remarkable events, such as hosting this most unforgettable one. Many of the 4,000 visitors stayed at the **St. Regis Hotel**, which is not only a landmark building, but admittedly the best hotel in town, and the favorite of the Clintons. Its hospitality and classic elegance matched up well with the style of the audience. Some of the key note speakers included such famed names as **Pico Iyer** who has been writing on Tibet for more than 20 years and writes for **The New York Times, The Financial Times and Time Magazine;** **Robert Thurman** who has been recognized as one of America's leading voices for sanity and peace in the new millennium; **Samdhong Rinpoche**, the first Chairman of the Tibetan Cabinet elected directly by the Tibetan people and **David Breashears**, an accomplished film maker, adventurer, author and mountaineer, who in 1985 became the first American who reached Mount Everest twice and transmitted the first live pictures from the summit.

The Aspen Institute established its own world-wide recognition with its mission being twofold: to foster values-based leadership, encouraging individuals to reflect on the ideals and ideas that define a good society, and to provide a neutral and balanced venue for discussing and acting on critical issues. The Aspen Institute has a board of trustees comprised of many of the world's most influential business people and leaders, including former Secretary of State **Madeleine Albright, Eleanor Merrill** (publisher, Washingtonian magazine), former **Disney CEO Michael Eisner, David Gergen of U.S. World and News Report**, former cabinet members **Henry Kissinger** and **Robert McNamara** and humanitarian **Her Majesty Queen Noor**.

A meeting between Republican Presidential candidate **John McCain** and the Dalai Lama also crowned this most memorable event. His Holiness emphasized that our 20th century is a "century of bloodshed" and said the 21st must be a "century of dialogue." He remarked that the new leader [President of the United States] needs to be strong, honest and transparent. He also stated that the "media needs to have a long nose and smell the truth even behind the scenes...They must inform the public clearly and openly" he said. "Transparency is very important."

Perhaps change is not that difficult if we listen with an open mind and a loving heart. Compassion for our fellow beings may just be what we need in order to achieve what we all strive for: a happier life, - but most importantly the preservation of our planet. It is there for the taking if love, peace, stability and honesty become more important than pride. For indeed as both Buddhism and science state: we cause our own unhappiness. Is not this time we stop?

