

**Transcription of His Holiness the Dalai Lama's Speech at
The Great Stupa of Universal Compassion
7 June 2007**

Transcribed by Sally McAra; lightly edited by Lillian Hankel
(Words in **bold** indicate emphasis by His Holiness)

Spiritual brothers and sisters, and also the rest of brothers and sisters, and also the political lady, the mayor? [*interpreter*: "the Mayor of the City of Bendigo, Julie Rivendell"]. So first of all, Mayor, in your formal welcome you expressed very warm feelings I very much appreciate, a true sort of expression, not only through words but also the expression from your eyes, your face; that's a true human sort of warmth I very much appreciate. Thank you.

Then local Aboriginal people [*interpreter*: "led by Uncle Brian Nelson and his group"]. Where is he? Heh heh. [*laughter*] Where?! Oh yes, yes, good! Thank you!

The feather [*pause, holding up a feather and stone that had earlier been given to His Holiness by Uncle Brian*] seems, I think, to the ancient people, whether in Australia or in America, Siberia or central Asia, including Tibet, I think the people seem to love feathers. Ha ha ha! [*Laughter in audience*]. I think this is symbol of a common tradition of **all** different people from different parts of the world.

And also this stone, I think from the Stone Age, is quite sharp, heh heh heh [*laughter*]. Certainly, at that time I think the people lived as a community. I think it was a "genuine socialist system" at that time. Each individual life for survival entirely depended on the community, so I think at that time the sense of community was very strong, was the only way to survive. Including hunting, and everywhere they worked together.

Sometimes we **modern** people, I think our minds can become very sophisticated, so sometimes we feel that community is not as important as individuals. Hahaha! Anyway, at that time, using this kind of weapon, I think very limited destruction.

And also the ancient people everywhere, I think in their daily life, they realise nature is **so** important. So, these people have a very **close** feeling with nature. I think in many parts of the world, the native tradition, they are so **near** to earth, and trees.

I think that part we modern people could learn. Sometimes, due to technology, we have the impression that we human beings can control nature. We are sometimes a bit **distant** from nature. So whenever I meet local people, the indigenous people, I always tell them, **some** of their tradition is still very useful or very relevant in today's world. So thank you very much.

Now of course I'm very happy to be here, a place where the huge construction is still going on, that ultimately they want to build this kind of stupa [*indicates model on stage*]. I think this is the largest stupa in Tibet. So when this construction is completed, it **could** be one of the biggest stupas or temples, I think no doubt in Australia and in the southern hemisphere. I think this would be the biggest stupa.

So, indeed, I feel it a great honour to come here and make some prayers with not only Tibetan Buddhist monks and nuns, but also from Vietnam, and then others I think from Thailand, and then besides Buddhist, also our spiritual brothers, I think, our Christian brothers. Any Muslim? Or Rabbi? No.

In many places in different parts of the world when I visit, many spiritual brothers and sisters from other traditions often come together, so that really gives me some kind of strong feeling of spiritual brothers and sisters. Yes, we have big differences in the philosophical field but in practice **all** major traditions have the

same practice, the practice of love, compassion, forgiveness, tolerance, contentment.

Many Christians and Muslims, spiritual brothers and sisters, their life is very simple, simplicity. So sometimes we Tibetan Buddhists are a bit spoiled, hahaha, I notice that. Although in essence I think monasticism, very similar. So the practice of simplicity, practice of contentment and also practice of self-discipline. These are **common**, whether Christian, Muslim, Jews, or whether Hindus, Buddhists, Jains. Same practice.

I consider that part is more important than the philosophical field. So, then, different philosophies of course; when we look in the philosophical field, there are fundamental differences. But when we ask ourselves: What is the purpose of these different philosophies? **Same** purpose. To **strengthen**, to **promote** basic human values. As I already mentioned, love, compassion, forgiveness; these things are the **real** matter, the important matter. [*Interpreter*: "The core, the core message".] So the different philosophy, its purpose is **strengthening** the practice of these things.

So therefore **all** spiritual traditions, in spite of different philosophies, **all** carry the **same** message, **all** have the **same** potential to help humanity, to save the world, to protect the world. So therefore, the **sense** of spiritual brothers and sisters is very, very useful and very important.

These days, unfortunately, in the name of religion, some divisions, even some conflicts sometimes happen. That's very sad. At such times I think we need special **efforts** to promote religious harmony. So now, here, is this construction to build a Buddhist temple, or Buddhist - how say- [*interpreter*: "The Great Stupa of Universal Compassion"].

Now I think firstly, Buddhism is one of the **ancient** world religions and also at present Buddhism is one of the important religions or spiritualities. And traditionally Buddhism is mainly in Asia. Whether we should consider Australia as Asia or West [*audience laughs, then His Holiness*], I think geographically it belongs to Asia, but the people are largely Westerners, heheheh, you are a bridge between East and West, isn't it? Heh, heh.

Traditionally people remained isolated from each other. Then, each tradition was more or less in isolation. Now in modern times that is a bit changed. However, I always stress: people from different traditions should preserve, should follow their **own** tradition rather than change. For example, we Tibetans and also Mongolians, and many Chinese, Vietnamese and Koreans, are traditionally Buddhist. So it is better to remain as a Buddhist. Then, millions of Hindus and millions of Muslims and millions of Christians, for example America, European and also Australian have, basically I think, a Judeo-Christian background.

So it is safer, it is **better** to keep **your own** tradition. Sometimes you should change religious faith. Some cases create more confusion and difficulties; so therefore it is safer to keep one's own religious tradition.

Meantime, the world is becoming smaller due to population and, due to technology and information, it's now much closer. So the whole world, the whole planet is becoming like a single entity. Basically the whole planet is multiracial, multicultural, multireligion.

Now in Australia here, because of immigrations from traditionally Buddhist countries like Vietnam, China, Cambodia and Laos, and in recent years some Tibetans also, there is a Buddhist community. I heard that in **this** location sometime back some Chinese came here, I think most probably traditionally from a Buddhist community. Although I met, when we were arriving here, some Europeans dressed like Chinese. [*Laughter*] So I tease them, **European Chinese!** Hahaha. Some Chinese, how say, [*interpreter*: "holding"]. They also carry, what call? Dragons? Chinese usually play that! So I ask them, [*interpreter*: "whether they knew how to perform the dragon dance"], hahaha, heheheh!

Another thing in this present reality, in order to develop genuine harmony among different religious traditions, I think knowledge, awareness about other traditions is **very** essential. For example, my own case. When I was in Tibet although there already were some Tibetan translations of the Bible, published in India, otherwise there were very few Christians and a few Muslims there. I think in the last four centuries a Muslim community there with their own mosque, small mosque. But the rest of the Tibetans are Buddhist; a bit isolated. So then you have no idea what is the value of other traditions. I think in my own case, when I was in Tibet, we felt Buddhism was best, another tradition was - "so-so". [Laughter] So, that kind of feeling.

Then I came out as a refugee and had the opportunity of meeting people from different traditions, like a very pleasant meeting of several hours with the late Thomas Merton and some others, and also Mother Theresa. After several meetings with these Christian practitioners, my knowledge about the value of Christianity really developed. And as a result, respect, admiration, appreciation: how much they made a contribution to humanity. So similarly, meeting with a genuine practitioner of Islam, very helpful to develop appreciation, respect. So similarly with Jews. So similarly, among the Jews, among the Christians, among the Muslims who have more acquaintance with Buddhists, their attitude towards Buddhism is very positive, very friendly.

Under the present circumstances, here we are in the twenty-first century. I always describe the past century, the twentieth century, like a century of bloodshed, a century of violence. Millions of people suffered through war. Now, at the beginning of the 21st century, not very healthy. But still, I think already there are strong signs everywhere that people are generally **really** fed up with violence, with bloodshed, with war, so the peace movement is everywhere: Europe, America, Asia, everywhere. For example, when the Iraq crisis was about to happen, there were demonstrations from Australia up to America, very strong.

So you see people, I think everywhere, particularly among the younger generation, I think **genuine** desire for peace, **totally** against using military forces. So there is real hope, or this real foundation. Now on that foundation, we should make **every effort** that this 21st century be a century of peace, a century of dialogue. That I think is very important. [Strong applause.]

I think at least among the believers, it is really worthwhile to make efforts to promote religious harmony, closer understanding among the different traditions. That also I think is one strong contribution for peace, for dialogue.

I think with that reality, that situation, the construction of this stupa could be useful. And then eventually, I always stress that wherever there is a Tibetan Buddhist Community or Buddhist Centre there, I'm always telling them, just simply the short prayer and the short meditation course – of course it is good, but not sufficient. The important thing is study.

So, this stupa – traditionally, there were many small, small temples. I think in the Tibetan case there was no cement, no iron [interpreter: "no cement and no iron was used"]. So, small, small temples. So small were the temples it was not necessary to build a few storeys. Now here you have very good materials – this iron and cement – so I think **some** portion should be like a **hall** and something like a **classroom**. Then some seminars, not only just Buddhist study but also comparative study about **all** different traditions.

And also, lasting more than twenty years – originally my initiative, but then later we more or less institutionalised it – that's the seminar or meeting or discussion between modern scientists and Buddhist scholars. It's quite useful. To us, to Buddhists, the scientific findings very useful. And to modern scientists, the Buddhist experience and Buddhist explanation about emotions, about mind, about consciousness is something helpful to them. So now lasting more than twenty years, more and more scientists, genuine scientists, quite well known scientists, now really showing a keen interest to get more detailed information about their subjects from Buddhist traditions. So, quite useful.

So, this stupa eventually can also be used not only for dialogue between different traditions but also between spirituality and modern science. Some discussions I think useful.

Of course, mine is just a mere suggestion. Ultimately it's up to those concerned people, heh heh, whether they utilise that, whether they go that direction or not, I don't know. But this is just my simple suggestion, heh heh. In any case, I think that academic work is very essential.

I think there are many troubles we are facing: it is quite obvious, nobody wants trouble. Isn't it? I mean from early morning, nobody is thinking: "How to create trouble today?" Nobody thinks that way! Everybody, from early morning, thinks, "Oh, I hope this day will be, should be a nice day, a happy day, a peaceful day." But trouble happens! Why?

I feel on one side we have by nature the selfish, or **self**-centred sort of attitude. Basically that is right. Unless I take care of myself, nobody takes care! That's true! So each individual should take fullest care of oneself. Right. But not at expense of others' rights. [*Interpreter*: "But not at the expense of others."] Hm? **Now that** can create trouble, yes! Self cherishing – good, but that goes to extremes! Don't care about others' rights; don't care about others' feelings and, **worst, harming** another in order to gain something for yourself. **That** is a mistake! **That** is a source of trouble!

And then another thing: our intelligence. I suppose our human intelligence is quite sophisticated and quite [*interpreter*: "advanced?"]. Huh? Advanced? I don't know that word [*jokingly*]. Quite smart! Quite smart, ha ha ha!

But often our action, our approach, becomes unrealistic. Because our action is based on the object's appearances, whether positive or negative. So there is always a gap between appearance and reality. So our action on the basis of appearance often becomes a mistake.

So therefore, study, analyse reality. In **every** field, whether in economy, in technology or science, including in the Buddhist tradition, it's very important. Carry thorough investigation in order to know the reality. Then we'll fully understand the reality. Then take action accordingly, then that action becomes realistic action. So, I think **often**, you see, it happens that, although sometimes a sincere motivation, but action is taken without knowing the real reality. The action is based on the appearance, so **that** often leads to disaster.

So therefore study is, I feel, very, very important. **Fuller** knowledge about the reality and **warm-heartedness**, these two things combine. Then humanity becomes much more happy, peaceful, friendly and meaningful. So, eventually, this centre should be, sort of, [*interpreter* "centre of learning"] one place to make a contribution regarding the promotion of warm-heartedness and the promotion of human knowledge.

So, that's all. Thank you! So finally, I very much appreciate all those concerned people who are helping this construction, including administration side. I heard, you see, very, very helpful and very positive attitude, I very much appreciate. [*Louder*:] Thank you very much!

So, thank you! Quite windy! Quite cold! Thank you! [*Laughs*] Bye-bye!