

**The 24th Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan Memorial Lecture:
By His Holiness and Nobel Laureate, the 14th Dalai Lama**

Respected elder brothers and sisters who have gathered here today. I am particularly happy to meet my Mataji—Dr. Kapila Vatsyanan. Why am I referring to her as Mataji? It is because she is always praising me. When I meet my friends and I see how they have aged over the years, I am reminded how old I too have grown. The wrinkles make me reflect on the years gone by. Often I don't remember the names of my friends and well-wishers. However, I distinctly remember their faces. In Buddhism we believe that one should live a meaningful life and not merely a long life. We also believe that each one of us has the 'Buddha-nature', inherent in us. This implies that every individual has the seed for good and compassionate nature. The goal is to awaken this potential within oneself.

The first step towards achieving our goal of Buddhahood is the acceptance of reality. One can only achieve one's true potential if one understands the reality and is not swayed by misconceptions. Here, we can also take help from Quantum Physics. Even Quantum physicists say that there is a huge difference between appearances and reality. And only those who are able to look beyond the veil of such false appearances are ultimately able to realize their true potential. Most of our destructive emotions like hatred, anger and fear that destroy inner peace are based on such beguiling appearances. It is these appearances that mislead us from following the path of truth and compassion. Constructive emotions such as compassion and patience can help successfully overcome negative emotions.

After accepting the reality, the next step towards strengthening the Buddha-nature within you is following the path of altruism. Altruism is the true test of one's character. One should unselfishly put others' wellbeing and happiness before

your own. However, altruism is not confined to Buddhism alone. Anyone can become an altruist. The notion of love and compassion is common in all religions. They all teach love and compassion. Even non-believers can practice altruism in their lives. Altruism does not have to do anything with religion. It is a human nature to show love and compassion for fellow human beings. We are all social animals. Even science agrees that the basic human nature is compassionate towards others. In fact, not just humans, but in animals as well we find that some animals show more loving and affectionate than others. For example, some dogs greet their owners with unabated love and affection while some dogs indulge in barking and attacking others the whole day. Such animals or even humans who do not have the ability to show the simple joys of life with their fellows are the ones who end up being lonely. Therefore, the real sufferers in the whole process are not others but they who sacrifice compassion for the sake of an inflated ego and arrogance.

I would like to offer my sincere reverence to the founder of Indian Institute of Advanced Study Shimla, Dr S Radhakrishnan today. He was one of the most profound philosophers of India. However, what I found to be most impactful was his unique ability to combine the ancient Indian traditions with the modern society. India today again needs to revive the rich ancient Indian systems of logic philosophy, and psychology, the study of mind and emotions, which are relevant to the world.

Today the world is faced with severe crises. There are wars and violence of unprecedented nature. Religion, which is meant for harmony, is being employed for extremist agenda. Everywhere, some people of a particular faith have turned against others and, in the process, are driving the society to its ruins. Therefore, India's role becomes very crucial in the present scenario of world affairs. The Indian concepts of Karuna (compassion) and Ahimsa (non-violence) are still relevant today. In fact, the world is in urgent need of learning about Karuna and

Ahimsa. Today, when the whole world is afflicted with conflicts and violence, India should rise and show how people are won with empathy and humanity. India is the land of Buddha. India is the land of Mahatma Gandhi. Some of the world's greatest religions have taken birth and flourished here. However, it is sad to see Indians being swept away in the flood of materialistic pleasures. And the only way to check the unprecedented growth of greed and intolerance that materialism has given us is to return to our roots and emphasize the universal values of love, compassion and harmony among us.

We must not limit our love and compassion to our friends alone. One's real test of love and harmony is against one's enemy. Our enemies are the litmus-test of our character. How we treat our enemy says a lot about how well we have inculcated the principles of Karuna and Ahimsa in us. Genuine compassion comes with acting responsibly for others' wellbeing. Shantideva says that our enemy is indeed our best teacher because they teach us patience. Here, again, India is the torch-bearer for the world. India has always followed the path of secularism. A multitude of religions and traditions are practiced in this land. India has given shelter to refugees and has become a home for the lost, the abused and the downtrodden.

For me as well, this land has given love and affection in abundance. I came here in 1959 and Indians welcomed Tibetans and our Buddhist culture with open arms. Today, after sixty years in exile, I am happy to see that a lot of scientists and thinkers are now realizing the significance of ancient Indian knowledge of mind and emotions, and philosophy, which we have preserved for over a millennium. People are increasingly accepting that peace of mind is of utmost importance and it cannot be traded for mere tangible possessions. Science has also accepted that it is not the brain that drives the individual's actions. There is also the concept of "Chitta" derived from the Sanskrit root word 'chit' meaning to be conscious. Our society, especially the youth today are confronted with such quandary is because

of their inability to control and realize the potential of their 'chitta.' Perhaps, it is the reason for the spike in drug abuse among the youth. A weak chitta or mind becomes a soft target for the invasion of destructive thoughts and emotions. And in the process, peace of mind is the first sacrifice that the individual unknowingly and helplessly makes.

Therefore, modern education systems should incorporate ancient Indian knowledge of training our mind and emotions. The curriculum has become focused on materialistic prosperity. Economic growth does not teach about peace of mind, humanity, etc. to the students.

Hence, I say that it is important on our part to teach secular ethical values to our children based on ancient Indian tradition. We cannot leave it to schools to teach ahimsa and karuna to our children. Children we know are innately compassionate and caring. However, once they are put on the radar of school education, they tend to be reduced to school curriculum. Also, we do not need to copy the West in teaching our students. There is no emphasis on human values. Ethical values are being taught with equal emphasis like for science, mathematics; economic etc. hence, India simply needs to revive her ancient knowledge systems in order to save the young generation by incorporating a more value based in the school curriculum. Therefore, we cannot blame our children for apathy. The responsibility also lies on the modern educational system. Our teachers should also be trained in human emotions. Emory University's Centre for Contemplative Science and Secular Ethics offers such a training through their Social, Emotional and Ethical Learning (SEE Learning) programme.

In fact, a lot of people ask me the reason behind the growing gap between the teachings of the masters and the practices of the followers today. I advise them to be a 21st century follower. If you are a Buddhist, be a 21st century Buddhist. While practicing the Four Noble Truths, also know the conventional and ultimate truths.

A blind adherence to faith is not the right way to follow any religion. In the Nalanda tradition of Buddhist philosophy, the followers are asked to develop a critical bend of mind. The idea is to question each and everything and not be blindfolded by traditions and rituals. Even Buddha's teachings should be questioned and analyzed. Only after due investigation should we adhere to those teachings that stand to the test of logic. I firmly believe that some topics found in our religious books, like science, should be taught as academic subjects, and except for their religious aspects. Religious literature should also be subjected to 'why' and 'how' by the individual and only adopted after they can relate to those tenets through logic. Logic is paramount in today's times.

However, one should take care that while being logical and scientific, one should also remain compassionate. How we see the world is testimony to the kind of thoughts that we accumulate or rather clutter our mind with. We should try to see some good in everyone. Our goal should be to develop and stabilize a loving energy within us. The more we compartmentalize between humans based on class, religions, gender etc., the more isolated we make ourselves from the world. And this isolation ultimately impacts us in making us lonelier and disillusioned with the society. I am also at the receiving end of the wrath of many in this world. However, I do not reciprocate to such people with any negative thought. On the contrary, I always wish the best for my enemies and remain optimistic in the most testing situations. Only then do I overcome my anxiety and fears.

There are many conflicts in the world today that have arisen due to these anxieties and fears of humans. We have started differentiating in every sphere and thus ended up making each one an 'other' to us. The more we construct such barriers in our mind, the more disharmony this causes in the society. Perhaps religions today have failed to control the wars that have plagued us is because we have confined ourselves to one truth and one religion. This myopia has resulted in making us extremists. Again, I turn to India for answers to such problems. This

land has seen co-existence of diverse religions on her soil. There are many religions, many tenets and thus many truths to acknowledge. We should accept that diversity of religion and philosophical concepts is the reality today and build harmony amongst the religions, instead of causing conflicts.

Although the pursuit of material comforts is necessary, yet it alone cannot promise a peaceful existence. Basic needs of life like food, clothing, shelter and friendship are indeed important in making life fulfilled. However, self-actualization of our mind can be achieved only when we cultivate constructive emotions to fulfill true happiness in life. Peace of mind helps to shape the outlook of the individual. And a happy compassionate individual is like the building block of a happy, peaceful society. These are the universal values. They are like particles of space that build up galaxies. They are the atoms that constitute the most complex of beings. A slight disturbance in them is enough to start a downfall. Attention to ethics of non-violence based on compassion as conceptualized in the traditional Indian system is the answer to our current problems. We need to reemphasize the ephemerality of material amenities and the lasting effects of moral principles. Due consideration to the interdependence of humans on each other as well as with nature is needed to ensure brotherhood and fraternity. The path to truth and compassion underpins a universal ethics that will ensure the foundation of a just and peaceful society.