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Widening the Circle of Love

His Holiness the Dalai Lama

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About the Author and Editor

His Holiness the Fourteenth Dalai Lama, Tenzin Gyatso, was born in 1935 to a peasant family in northeastern Tibet. The world's foremost Buddhist leader, he travels extensively, speaking eloquently in favour of ecumenical understanding, kindness and compassion, respect for the environment and, above all, world peace.

Jeffrey Hopkins, Ph.D., served for a decade as the interpreter to the Dalai Lama. A Buddhist scholar and the author of more than twenty-five books, he is professor of Tibetan and Buddhist studies at the University of Virginia.

Praise for *Widening the Circle of Love*

'A generous and sensitive road map to not-so-random acts of kindness' *Publishers Weekly*

'One of the world's best-loved spiritual teachers' *Publishing News*

'A Buddhist approach that may help Christian readers to reflect on their own views' *The Church Times*

'His Holiness speaks with wisdom and practicality on the full range of human problems' *Pride Magazine*

'His Holiness is a great man' Harrison Ford

Books by the Dalai Lama also available from Rider

The Good Heart
The Dalai Lama's Book of Wisdom
The Little Book of Wisdom
The Dalai Lama's Book of Daily Meditations
The Little Book of Buddhism
Stages of Meditation
How to Practise
Advice on Dying

Widening the Circle of Love

His Holiness the Dalai Lama

Translated and Edited by
Jeffrey Hopkins



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Foreword

I met my first teacher of Tibetan Buddhism near the end of 1962 in New Jersey. A Kalmyk Mongolian from Astrakhan, where the Volga River empties into the Caspian Sea, Geshe Wangyal, like many Mongolian monastics, traveled to Tibet to enter a monastic university and stayed there for thirty-five years. Having witnessed the devastation of Buddhist institutions in the Soviet Union, he sensed—after Chinese Communist incursions into Tibet in 1950—what was coming for Tibet, and by 1955 left for India. Three years later he journeyed by ship to the United States with the help of Church World Service.

Almost from the moment of his arrival in the United States, Geshe Wangyal began teaching Tibetan Buddhism to all who sought it, establishing a monastery and learning center and inviting four Tibetan monastics to join him in 1960. They taught many Americans, including myself. Some of these eventually became influential in academics, politics, medicine, religion, publishing, and other fields.

The massive exodus from Tibet in 1959, when the Dalai Lama escaped to India, led to the formation of Tibetan schools for laypersons and monastics in India, Sikkim, and Nepal, including the first monastic education facility in what had been a prison in the heat of Buxaduor, India, a place of painful accommodation to the climate and low altitude of the new environment. Eventually, main monastic institutions of all the major orders of Tibetan Buddhism were reestablished, albeit in diminished form, in India and Nepal. In their new situations, the larger monastic colleges seized the opportunity to reform themselves, dropping certain aspects, such as the institution of the monk-police, the

supposed disciplinarians much feared in old Tibet. Other groups created innovative religious educational institutions outside the control of monasteries. Also, lay education on the primary and secondary levels came to include versions of topics hitherto confined to clerics.

Overseas, Tibetan teachers—both monastic and lay—sought to adapt earlier methods of study and practice to more secular environments. At present, after slow but steady success in thousands of centers around the world, we are on the verge of establishing significant centers of Tibetan-style learning outside the Tibetan community. The diaspora has made it possible for parts of Tibet's traditional training dating back more than a thousand years to spread far beyond the land of their origin. Outside Tibet there is a thirst for the rigor of these studies and an appreciation for ancient, time-tested modes of training, even though there are more than considerable difficulties in getting such studies up and running outside their Tibetan and Mongolian environments.

One might think that the world is beset by forces preventing just such a development: increasing tendencies toward exploitation, greed, and lust; rampant consumerism; incessant manipulation of opinions that reinforce coarse urges; the ubiquitous presence of contentless entertainment; increasing divides between rich and poor; sound-bite explanations for complexities of human existence; overeating to the point of pain and obesity; movements to roll back worker rights to nineteenth-century levels; a ridiculous emphasis on economic profit, as if this could be the only goal of breathing. However, there are signs that these dark forces are producing a backlash of dissatisfaction and a willingness to try other ways.

Many people throughout the world have both a local culture and a global culture, and many have adopted outlooks that have risen to the significance of their original local culture. This openness suggests a readiness for new

perspectives, but it could indicate a fractured sense of time, which may threaten the kind of immersion that is required in Tibetan Buddhist practice.

The exiled Tibetan government is moving to embody the democratic principle of separating political control from religious institutions yet still staying within the rubric of Buddhist ideals. This parallels the adaptation of Tibetan educational systems, which have become a mixture of the secular and the religious.

Tibetans living outside their country are struggling to determine what traditional ways to retain—and how to do so. For instance, all of us value the long tradition of Tibetan medicine. The ingenuity of hundreds of physicians over more than a thousand years has resulted in the development of powerful herbal and mineral treatments. As we look at other parts of the world, where modernity has destroyed and replaced old ways of life, and where the wisdom of ancient medical systems has been lost forever, we see the preciousness of the treasure chest of ancient lore preserved in the separate traditions of Tibet and China.

Forests need to be maintained through planned cutting and recultivation to preserve varieties of plants and animals potentially beneficial to the world, but the effort is fraught with problems of displacement and commerce that could condemn people to perpetual poverty; Tibetans too are faced with the conflicting need to feed people now and market forces that will eventually lay the treasure chest bare. Just as unregulated markets do not make markets free, helter-skelter development does not ensure progress. These are problems the whole world is facing, and there are no easy solutions.

The future well-being of Tibet depends upon the willingness of the Chinese government to set aside its fears and engage in sincere negotiations with the exiled Tibetan government. Is the current Chinese call for negotiations a new tack indicating sincere interest, or is it just another

ruse? To this day, the Beijing government has practiced deceit as a delaying tactic, one example being its requirement that Tibet give up the goal of independence, this despite the fact that the Dalai Lama dropped such demands as far back as 1978. The failure of the Chinese government is a lack of love and compassion, which we know from our own lives eventually leads to self-destruction.

Throughout the world love must dissolve intolerance; knowledge must undermine ignorance; coordinated activism must replace passive acceptance and despair; dialogue must replace recrimination; innovative justice must displace vengeance; morality must supplant emphasis on the bottom line; recognition of universal rights must replace disenfranchisement. Only a determined effort over a long period can overcome the entrenched forces of foolishness and greed.

It is my hope that this book on love, in which His Holiness the Dalai Lama draws from a long tradition of Tibetan techniques for transformation of mind and heart, will contribute to what we need so dearly—a sense of love and compassion for each other.

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My Outlook

If the internal enemy of hatred is not tamed,
When one tries to tame external enemies, they increase.
Therefore, it is a practice of the wise to tame themselves
By means of the forces of love and compassion.

—BODHISATTVA TOKMAY
SANGPO

WHEN I SPEAK about love and compassion, I do so not as a Buddhist, nor as a Tibetan, nor as the Dalai Lama. I do so as one human being speaking with another. I hope that you at this moment will think of yourself as a human being rather than as an American, Asian, European, African, or member of any particular country. These loyalties are secondary. If you and I find common ground as human beings, we will communicate on a 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 human is basic, the foundation from which we all arise. You are born as a human being, and that cannot change until death. All else—whether you are educated or uneducated, young or old, rich or poor—is secondary.

SOLVING PROBLEMS

In big cities, on farms, in remote places, throughout the countryside, people are moving busily. Why? We are all

motivated by desire to make ourselves happy. To do so is right. However, we must keep in mind that too much involvement in the superficial aspects of life will not solve our larger problem of discontentment. Love, compassion, and concern for others are real sources of happiness. With these in abundance, you will not be disturbed by even the most uncomfortable circumstances. If you nurse hatred, however, you will not be happy even in the lap of luxury. Thus, if we really want happiness, we must widen the sphere of love. This is both religious thinking and basic common sense.

Anger cannot be overcome by anger. If a person shows anger to you, and you show anger in return, the result is a disaster. In contrast, if you control your anger and show its opposite—love, compassion, tolerance, and patience—then not only will you remain in peace, but the anger of others also will gradually diminish. No one can argue with the fact that in the presence of anger, peace is impossible. Only through kindness and love can peace of mind be achieved.

Only human beings can judge and reason; we understand consequences and think in the long term. It is also true that human beings can develop infinite love, whereas to the best of our knowledge animals can have only limited forms of affection and love. However, when humans become angry, all of this potential is lost. No enemy armed with mere weapons can undo these qualities, but anger can. It is the destroyer.

If you look deeply into such things, the blueprint for our actions can be found within the mind. Self-defeating attitudes arise not of their own accord but out of ignorance. Success, too, is found within ourselves. Out of self-discipline, self-awareness, and clear realization of the defects of anger and the positive effects of kindness will come peace. For instance, at present you may be a person who gets easily irritated. However, with clear understanding and awareness, your irritability can first be undermined, and then replaced.

The purpose of this book is to prepare the ground for that understanding from which true love can grow. We need to cultivate the mind.

All religions teach a message of love, compassion, sincerity, and honesty. Each system seeks its own way to improve life for us all. Yet if we put too much emphasis on our own philosophy, religion, or theory, becoming too attached to it, and try to impose it on other people, the result will be trouble. Basically all the great teachers, including Gautama Buddha, Jesus Christ, Muhammad, and Moses, were motivated by a desire to help their fellow beings. They did not seek to gain anything for themselves, nor to create more trouble in the world.

Religion may have become synonymous with deep philosophical issues, but it is love and compassion that lie at the heart of religion. Therefore, in this book I will describe the practice of love that I also do. In experience the practice of love brings peace of mind to myself and helps others. Foolish selfish people are always thinking of themselves, and the result is always negative. Wise persons think of others, helping them as much as they can, and the result is happiness. Love and compassion are beneficial both for you and for others. Through your kindness toward others, your mind and heart will open to peace.

Expanding this inner environment to the larger community around you will bring unity, harmony, and cooperation; expanding peace further still to nations and then to the world will bring mutual trust, mutual respect, sincere communication, and finally successful joint efforts to solve the world's problems. All this is possible. But first we must change ourselves.

Each one of us is responsible for all of humankind. We need to think of each other as true brothers and sisters, and to be concerned with each other's welfare. We must seek to lessen the suffering of others. Rather than working solely to acquire wealth, we need to do something meaningful,

something seriously directed toward the welfare of humanity as a whole.

Being motivated by compassion and love, respecting the rights of others—this is real religion. To wear robes and speak about God but think selfishly is not a religious act. On the other hand, a politician or a lawyer with real concern for humankind who takes actions that benefit others is truly practicing religion. The goal must be to serve others, not dominate them. Those who are wise practice love. As the Indian scholar and yogi Nagarjuna says in his *Precious Garland of Advice*:

Having analyzed well
All deeds of body, speech, and mind,
Those who realize what benefit self and others
And always do these are wise.

A religious act is performed out of good motivation with sincere thought for the benefit of others. Religion is here and now in our daily lives. If we lead that life for the benefit of the world, this is the hallmark of a religious life.

This is my simple religion. No need for temples. No need for complicated philosophy. Your own mind, your own heart, is the temple; your philosophy is simple kindness.