

Tibet and the Dalai Lama

(The following public lecture was given at the 1960 Convention at Wheaton.)

RUKMINI DEVI

AS you all know, the present day emergency in Tibet has become a burning problem in the world. In that problem people are politically interested, but there are also those who are interested both from a cultural and a spiritual point of view. Certainly one never thought that Tibet would come so glaringly before the public eye. Tibet has been a land about which many books have been written, about which many travelers have spoken. It has been recognized always as a land of mystery, a land which is difficult to approach and which still maintains an ancient culture and a way of its own.

For those who are spiritually inclined, Tibet is a land of mystery not just from the point of view of sensationalism (as unfortunately it is for many); not due to its magic and so on. Its interest for the more intelligent lies rather in that it has been a center of great spiritual knowledge, where men of outstanding achievement as spiritual leaders have lived and are living.

Politically, it has not been of particular concern—except that it does have quietly a place, a very definite place, in the political map; it is situated in a unique spot where it is of most extraordinary importance.

As you know, it has always been called "the roof of the world." This expression, "the roof of the world," has two interpretations: first, it is the highest habitation of man; second, it has symbolized protection just as the roof protects a home!—a land of protection, a center from which protection is held forth to the whole world! Such protection exists because of the influence which such a place has. Especially in India there has been for centuries (yes, even for thousands of years) an association of ideas not only with Tibet but with the whole Himalayan region. Poets have written about that area; great scholars have written in its praise. The Himalayas are not merely a source of great rivers, or a spot for explorers and mountain-climbers; (it is only recently, in fact, that some people think of this area as a place to climb mountains—unfortunately even associating it with the idea of hunting, the Abominable Snow Man, and so on). The Himalayan region is not merely a beauty spot; it has been

a center of inspiration. That very beauty itself has been the inspiration of poets and of great teachers. And for long in India, when people have wanted to take to a spiritual life, have wanted to retire from the world, their aim has been to retire in the Himalayas. Not only that, our music in India, our painting, sculpture, poetry—even these in great measure have been inspired by the Himalayan Mountains.

This Himalayan region has many states, many countries: Bhutan, Sikkim, Tibet, Ladakh—and, of course, Nepal on the border, and Pakistan. They are very closely associated, all these mountain regions, and amongst these regions Tibet has held a very special position. As for religion, most of these states are half Hindu and half Buddhist. This is one of the few areas where people worship the Hindu deities as well as the Buddha. Bhutan and Sikkim and other states are entirely Buddhist and have looked for inspiration to Tibet. Now Tibet itself is a land entirely dedicated to the religion of the Buddha. Still, the Buddhist religion of Tibet is different from the Buddhism which you find in India, or in Burma or China. It has its own unique expression which you might call just "Tibetan Buddhism." This is a Buddhism, then, which includes many of the teachings of Hinduism. So it is a very remarkable mixture. It is still entirely Buddhist; and this devotion of the Tibetans to the Lord Buddha is, in my opinion, perhaps a most unique feature. To all these people of the Himalayan region their religion is the most precious thing they have. There is nothing that a Tibetan mother aims for more greatly than that her son become a server in one of the monasteries—or that he be recognized as what they call "an incarnation of a Lama."

"An incarnation," I must explain, is a person who is reincarnated from a previous life; who in a previous life has been a Lama; who is again born and again recognized; and who again leads the religious life until he perfects himself in the service of the Lord Buddha. In Tibet more than twenty percent of the people are so dedicated, especially for the religious life. And they are celibates also, because connected with this dedication is the idea of the pure life with no worries, no responsibility except that

of serving as teachers of the spiritual knowledge.

Because of this background amongst its people, Tibet has created an atmosphere which has made it possible for remarkable people from other lands also to go there to live and to study. This is why many have found in Tibet that inspiration and knowledge which they could not find anywhere else.

It is very difficult to find even in India, today, what you could find in Tibet. Some of the most ancient learning which one expects to find in India, due to gradual incursions from other civilizations, can be found there no more. Many invasions through India have step by step nearly destroyed Indian culture, even the Indian religion! Due to such invasions (and due also to the influence of the West), India which was once the center of the *highest* spiritual learning has gradually lost its place of very high learning.

Yet all that one reads about ancient India one could find more recently in the Tibetan monasteries. I say, "It *was* there"; for today, unfortunately, we do not know what is left. Many of the libraries have been burned down; probably some of those most precious books have disappeared. Hundreds of monasteries have been razed to the ground. And many existing monasteries are no longer centers of meditation and peace, but centers of military activities; even of jazz and rock-and-roll! Such things as the East has very aptly learned from the West. So you find this very sad destruction which we never thought would come to such a faraway and peaceful land as Tibet since the great keynote in the minds and hearts of the Tibetan people is the ideal of peace. I mean peace not merely in the sense of no war, but an inner peace: the search to discover an inner peace, and also, naturally, to express an outer peace.

To follow the teachings of the Buddha, we must learn to be detached; not to be attached to possessions, not to be attached to wealth. Therefore, in Tibet they have tried to lead a completely harmless life, with no ambition for power over any other country; or desire to rule over others, no desire to dominate others, no desire to acquire possessions from any other country.

The British understood the key position which Tibet occupied; and—though Tibet was left absolutely free—they created Tibet as a kind of buffer state—a way of protecting the Himalayan region, as well as India which they were

then ruling. So they had their own representative in Tibet. And by some of these representatives (such as Sir Charles Bell, for example) some outstanding books have been written.

But after the British gave freedom to India, in 1947, India did not want to maintain her earlier position with Tibet. India did not want any country even to imagine that she had a hold over her. Unfortunately, the removal of that position, of Tibet as a buffer state, has been not only a danger to Tibet, it is even becoming a danger to India. The intention, of course, was good: India, as soon as she was free, wanted to accept a position of neutrality, wanted further to be a country which would try to bring peace between the East and the West, peace between all nations. She has, in fact, tried to play that very important part in the United Nations, in all political matters.

Unfortunately, in her effort to bring peace, India with good intentions established relationships with countries such as Russia and China—countries with a great potential of danger. Then many people (especially in America) fearing communism, thought that India must be going communist. Perhaps there *was* a danger of India's going communist. Wherever there is poverty, there is always this danger. But India, temperamentally, is not a country that can accept violence. Certain Indians, perhaps, might accept the *theory* of communism; but even the poorest man finds it, on the whole, against his nature to accept and to apply any philosophy which must bring disharmony, violence and bloodshed.

Of course, communists did manage, nonetheless, to establish in India a communist party—and even a state which was for a time ruled by communists. But India itself was not really going to the communists. Pandit Nehru is a man who has very, very deep feelings. He is very deeply and very easily moved by suffering. Therefore he has the greatest fear of the suffering possible through war and went out of his way to be friends with the Chinese. Perhaps he also thought that the Chinese were being misunderstood by the rest of the world; he had sent many missions to China, all of which had come back reporting what splendid progress China was making in so many ways. A large number of Indians were opposed to Nehru's judgment; they could see that however much progress there might be, there was also a very terrible dictatorship. But Pandit Nehru was convinced that Chou-En-Lai meant well. Therefore, he accepted China as a friendly neighbor

in whom he had trust. That, unfortunately, was the first big "mistake." (Whether it is a mistake which you and I would not have made under the circumstances is another question)

So in 1950 when the Chinese declared Tibet to be an autonomous part of China, there was, of course, great fear in Tibet itself. In fact, Tibetans said that at that time there were evil omens. (They believe in all these things and many of them do come true.) One omen was of a tremendous flood. Perhaps it was this reason—this apparent forewarning—which made the Dalai Lama even then decide to remove some of his wealth and have it guarded elsewhere.

It was in 1956 that I had my first opportunity of meeting the present Dalai Lama. The year marked the two-thousand five-hundredth birthday of the Lord Buddha. India took a great part in celebrating this anniversary and from all over the world people journeyed to India in order to recognize the great day, and also to participate in the great Buddhist seminar. The commemoration, a very remarkable and magnificent event, took place in New Delhi.

During that period (and normally nobody would have expected it!) the greatest occurrence was the arrival of the Dalai Lama!—a person who in the past never moved out of his own country and is difficult to see even *in* that country; a person who is considered to be an "Incarnation of the Buddha." Of course you must understand what that means. In the East the ideal is that *every* individual is an expression of the divine Self. That is why mothers give their children names of divinities; and when a person is very, very great, he is called an "Incarnation of . . ." someone. An "Incarnation" does *not* necessarily mean that the person *is* an incarnation of that great being for whom he is named but an essence or a part of that being is in the individual; a part of that divine self is flowing through that individual. So when there is, for example, a "living Buddha," they really mean "he who lives like the Buddha"; he who is an embodiment of the spirit and blessing of the Buddha.

Those interested have ways of finding out how a Dalai Lama is to be discovered. They know the signs by which they test children and discover him who is to be the next Dalai Lama. This particular Dalai Lama was discovered in this way when he was a very young boy. He was only about twenty-one in 1956. It was a great event that he was to visit India for the commemoration of the Lord Buddha's birthday. With him was coming also the Panchen Lama, one of the spiritual leaders of his coun-

try. So this was a marvellous experience for the whole of India, and for international guests as well.

Now the Dalai Lama himself is, of course, quite wonderful. So he impressed everyone. Many people had come to see him, of course, purely out of curiosity; it was something new, something extraordinary. But a large number came also with devotion. The Indian people do naturally have great devotion to outstanding religious teachers. Yet whatever the reasons may have been for which they came to meet him, almost unanimously everyone felt that this Dalai Lama was certainly an outstanding personality, of great charm and great beauty. What amazed many people—since he has always been up on a pedestal—was his extraordinary simplicity: the way that he moved with the people; the way he accepted even modern "civilization," which probably he saw for the first time in India.

He traveled all over India. He was taken to every kind of place. He saw even the cinema, the ordinary kind of cinema. Factories for the first time! Dinner parties for the first time!—which are probably the worst experience that any Lama can have; the kind of banquet that is arranged is certainly a great shock to an Eastern person who has never had any previous contact with this kind of thing. I myself happened to be at one of those banquets and I still remember vividly that within five minutes after the banquet had begun, I discovered a number of empty chairs. Very quietly and in complete silence, unnoticed by everybody, a large number of Lamas had quietly disappeared into their rooms. And I thought how wise they were! How I wished that we could follow their example.

You must remember that a large number of the Easterners who lead religious lives are really celibates. They had never had any contact with women—and you know what a modern banquet is, in Western style (which some are adopting in the East): they always have to put a woman next to a man. And the poor Lamas! When they saw that they were surrounded by women in all directions—women, whom previously they had never even looked at!—they just decided that it was best to disappear. You can understand why they would not want to come to America where so many women would want to meet them.

As for me, my first *real* meeting with the Dalai Lama (though I had seen him earlier) was when he came to Madras to our cultural center where we were able to arrange a recep-

tion for him. It was this particular event which really helped me to make a deeper contact later, and to be of some service to the Tibetans also.

Before the Dalai Lama returned to Tibet there was also the visit of Chou-En-Lai to India. This caused a continual supervision by the Chinese over the Dalai Lama and the Panchen Lama. Not only supervision. The Chinese wanted to make sure how these two important guests were received. So there was a tremendous protocol. The Panchen Lama had to be received *almost* with the same honours as the Dalai Lama. So we had to have seats about a quarter of an inch higher, no more, for the Dalai Lama. There was a continuous watching. Obviously the Chinese were disappointed in the way that the Panchen Lama was received. People had the intuition to know who was the real person, and it was the Dalai Lama who really won the regard of the people.

Just before he returned to Tibet, the Dalai Lama consulted Pandit Nehru as to whether or not he might stay on in India—even then—and perhaps have some of his people there. But Chou-En-Lai assured Pandit Nehru that there would be no interference on the part of the Chinese in regard to Tibet. Tibetan religion would be free; Tibetans would be allowed to follow their own way of life—except, perhaps, that the Chinese would help the Tibetans to make a few reforms in their country. That was all. When this message was given, the Dalai Lama accepted it in good faith and went back to Tibet. You can see how much that word was kept.

Last year (1959) there occurred that great dramatic event of the Dalai Lama's disappearance from Tibet. The whole world was aware of this event and people thought that he had been captured by the Chinese. Then suddenly he appeared on the borders of India and there was a great wave of feeling all over the land. Unfortunately, India did *not* bring the case of Tibet before the United Nations. But Pandit Nehru did welcome the Dalai Lama, and also the large number of Tibetans who began to pour into India—about eighteen thousand so far. There would be thousands more if the Chinese had not blocked the way.

So the Dalai Lama, with his mother, his sister and his *guru* (teacher) arrived in India by an unknown route with many others under most difficult circumstances. They walked for weeks; then they finally arrived in India and found asylum there. It was then that I had the opportunity of going to see him and that meeting was indeed a great revelation. It revealed to

me the character not only of the Dalai Lama but of the race as a whole.

They accepted their suffering as *karma*, to be overcome. Still more notable was the attitude that as followers of the Lord Buddha they could not hate even the Chinese; but they could pray for them. They knew in their own hearts that "Truth will finally triumph"—that was a statement which the Dalai Lama made when he gave a speech in Adyar a few months ago.

I know that many people have said, "Oh, Tibet is a backward country! There is so much poverty; there are so many beggars," and so on. But from the Eastern viewpoint, poverty is an experience which each individual must some time go through. Even well-to-do people sometimes, when there are pilgrimages, beg their way to great centers.

And when we think of reforms—well, the Chinese say that they want to make reforms. But if the Chinese communist is the example of the reformed individual, then it is about time for us to realize that the reform is probably an expression of savagery. The kind of reform the Chinese make may ultimately benefit the body but will kill the soul. We have to remember that real reform is not merely a reform of the outer self; it is not a reform which brings wealth and comfort; it is a reform which gives an attitude, a way of life—the most precious gift that anybody can give.

On the whole I found this marvellous expression, this attitude, amongst the people of Tibet. I realized that the worship which they have so sincerely performed in the name of the Buddha, and the self-preparation which they have undertaken in the name of the Buddha, have created an over-all atmosphere; have produced this magnificent attitude which is the great lesson which we all have to learn from them.

It is one of the greatest tragedies that this ancient civilization, untouched, unspoiled, is being destroyed—being completely destroyed. At this time there are more Chinese in Tibet than there are Tibetans and the greatest attempt the Chinese make is to kill the religion which has given to the Tibetans that serenity and that strength. It is the *religion* which has resisted communism; therefore, the Chinese want to kill that particular religion. In this effort the Chinese have destroyed monasteries; they have deported children; they have tortured the Lamas—and some of these tortures are most terrible to hear about.

When I was last with the Dalai Lama, his translator (a very learned gentleman) had just heard of such a torture. The head of a great monastery had been asked to accept communism, to say that it is superior to Buddhism. The final result was that they tied ropes on his hands and feet and tried to tear him apart. Even then, until the minute he died, the only thing he said was, "You can do nothing to me; my body is not myself." This is one of these loyalties which you will find only in such places as Tibet.

But in every misfortune we have a lesson to learn. There is, for example, the misfortune that China turned its back upon the friendship of India, even claimed some of India's land. Perhaps this misfortune has a good side, too, in that many Indians who had faith in China have at last been disillusioned. Their faith has been thoroughly shaken. So has the faith of Pandit Nehru.

Two small nations like Malaya and the Philippines were courageous enough to try to intercede for Tibet. They brought a resolution before the United Nations. That resolution was discussed; what was the result? *It was discussed.* Nothing happened to aid Tibet. Nothing can happen short of war; that is the tragedy. How can China be removed except by war? I remember how in the Indian parliament people were criticizing Pandit Nehru for not taking up arms against China and he said: "Do you realize that if I take arms against China, it means that the entire world is to be involved? Am I to be responsible for the third world war?" On the other hand, what happens to Tibet?

I do feel that in the beginning if India had allowed China's case to be brought to the United Nations—and if China had been accepted as an independent and a free nation—things might have been different. Now the situation is that the Dalai Lama is in India, together with about 18,000 Tibetans. Of course, people have come to their help. Tibetan Relief Committees from America and India and from other countries did try to help. Even the missionaries aided them—though, unfortunately, the missionaries make use of these situations for the purpose of converting. One or two Lamas have even become Christians. One Lama who had been converted tried to convert the Dalai Lama also! But the Tibetans believe, at least they hope, that things will finally come out right, by the blessing of the Lord Buddha.

Those Tibetans who are now in India all feel that they have been miraculously saved. They escaped almost before the very eyes of the Chi-

nese—the Dalai Lama and his group—in the evening, with all the glaring lights! And the hooves of the horses they were riding could be heard. The patrol, the Chinese guards, were moving about; yet they never suspected. Other things happened. For example, as they were walking on the snow clearly visible from the air, Chinese planes were flying low above them. Clouds came and hid them. So they, the Tibetans, were not seen. They were not captured.

Those who escaped believe that all this was for some purpose and that they have been protected. I also believe that there has been a great protection but for what future we do not know; it is yet to be seen.

In the meantime they are there in India, in different camps; and their friends are trying to create for them a monastery so that they can conduct their monastic life. A majority of the Tibetans, young people and Lamas, will be allowed to study; to go on as they had been doing in Tibet. Many are great artists; they can create. They can make things which will help them to earn their own way also. You see, it is not enough for us to give just bread—just food and medicine. These people of Tibet cannot just vegetate; they must lead lives which are creative and spiritual.

India herself seems to have a part to play in giving a home to many who have run away from various countries as refugees. The first Christians who were persecuted found their home in India. The Jews found a home in India. The worshippers of Zarathustra, known as Parsis, live only in India. So India has added to itself various religions. Now perhaps India will be a home for the Tibetan way of thinking: Tibetan Buddhism. Perhaps in the future, it will be the only place where some expression of Tibetan life will be found. What this means is in the future; how it will contribute to the welfare of the world we do not know. But to find a land where many people, many races, many civilizations, many religions, can live together harmoniously—surely, to find such a place is of much importance to the world! It will be by itself a United Nations.

As for the Dalai Lama, what he is going to be, what he is going to do, whether he will go back to Tibet or stay in India—all that is impossible to say. But wherever he is, there is no doubt that he is a man of amazing intelligence, outstanding knowledge, great charm. Though young, there is the authority and the experience of age in him. I am sure he will play some great part in the world.

We are living at a time when one crisis follows another. More tragedies may happen but let us not forget those that exist! Let us try to help in every way that we possibly can; by our thoughts, by our feelings, by our prayers; physically, materially, in every way possible. As the Dalai Lama himself has said, "I know that Truth will ultimately triumph." So we must have faith in that idea and *we must work for it.*

Let us not forget the great problem of the Tibetans, the great tragedy that Tibet is going through. If it ever happens that Tibet is free—and it may happen!—these Tibetans will have a very important part to play. And when they rebuild their own nation, because of their greatness and because of their outlook, a new Tibet will emerge. And it will be even more inspiring to the world than the Tibet that has been.

The Way of the Cross

HUGH SHEARMAN

WHenever we are not completely identified with it and experiencing and reavling it as a power which is ourselves, the purpose of life reveals itself in some pattern or sequence of events, of things that happen to us.

Thus there is a certain psychological pattern of development which works out in everybody's life, with many minor variations but with an essential sameness, which makes us all true to type as human beings. None of us is as completely human as we should like to be. We are not vividly and self-consciously human at all times. We find ourselves falling back into a dull automatic condition when our reactions, and even our thoughts and feelings, operate independently of something that we feel to be our truest human selves. We are not always fully, humanly awake. The essential pattern of our humanity does not therefore show itself clearly. It is blurred and shows itself in a broken spasmodic way.

In many of the great religions, however, we are offered a portrayal of a completely human being, one who is in full command of all the highest and noblest attributes of human nature at all times. Such a one, having completed his humanity, is also showing forth some of the characteristics of a condition lying beyond our human state. He is in some measure super-human. Even in quite primitive myths and cultures, such an individual is represented not only as having ascended to the peak of human achievement but also as having provided a means by which Divinity can descend into our human world. Since there is a complete pattern of manhood, there is also revealed, through that manhood, some glimpse at least of Godhead. And in that glimpse of Divinity be-

yond, we see yet again the same pattern or sequence in a grand and mysterious form, dimly expressed in the whole process of universal existence.

In the grand pattern, as it is variously symbolized or enacted, there are certain great crises, certain exceptional heights or depths of experience. Supreme among these is that which figures in Christian tradition as the Crucifixion. For the most part, the attention of Christians has been directed to this as a historical event in the life-story of a divine man, one whose humanity had been perfected and transended and made one with an overshadowing Divinity. But we learn also from Christian tradition that that tremendous crisis occurs in the pattern of life at all levels. At the universal level, the level of the Divinity within and beyond our whole existence, we are told that there is a mysterious sacrifice, a death to be died, that the grand pattern may be fulfilled and the universe built and perfected. There is a mysterious reference to a "Lamb slain from the foundation of the world." And at the individual level, within the psychological experience of each human being, it is indicated that the same must take place.

There are certain general characteristics in the story of the Crucifixion which reveal much with regard to the same crisis at any level. The victim is a saviour. He saves others. Himself he cannot save. He knows that the crisis of his Crucifixion is inevitable, cannot in any manner be evaded. He knows that it is part of the plan, part of life's pattern and sequence for him. What he suffers is suffered for others. He is able to confer some special benefit upon others by what he himself goes through. Finally, the Crucifixion leads on to a Resurrection. This