Chapter-IV
"We are at the dawn of an age in which extreme political concepts and dogmas may cease to dominate human affairs. We must use this historic opportunity to replace them by universal human and spiritual values and ensure that these values become the fibre of the global family which is emerging." [“Human Rights and Universal Responsibilities,” In The Dalai Lama, “A Policy of Kindness: An Anthology of Writings By and About the Dalai Lama, edited and compiled by Sidney Piburn, Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers Pvt. Ltd., (1990) 1997, p.104].

“Let us not talk of karma, but simply of one’s responsibility towards the whole world.” [His Holiness The Dalai Lama with Fabien Ouaki, A Conversation with The Dalai Lama on Money, Politics, and Life As It Could Be, Boston: Wisdom Publications, 1999, p.52].

“Religion, according to (Gandhi), should pervade all our activities, it cannot and ought not to be pursued in seclusion from one’s fellow-beings and in separation from life’s other activities. The equivalent term for ‘religion’ is Dharma in Sanskrit, which means moral obligation and connotes individual’s integrity as well as social solidarity. Gandhi understood religion completely from that point of view.” [Geeta Mehta, “Gandhi’s Integral Humanism,” Gandhi Marg, (New Delhi), vol. 22, no. 2, July-September 1999, p. 222].

“I would not only not try to convert, but would not even secretly pray that anyone should embrace my faith. Cases of real, honest conversion are quite possible. If some people, for their inward satisfaction and growth change their religion, let them do so.” [Young India, June 27, 1927 In Anand T. Hingorani and Ganga A. Hingorani, The Encyclopaedia of Gandhian Thought, New Delhi: All India Congress Committee (I), 1985, p. 62].
TOWARDS A VISIONARY HUMANISM: 
THE DALAI LAMA'S ENGAGED ETHIC 
IN HIS CONSIDERATIONS OF RELIGION

Proponents of the problematic of 'progress' agree, by and large, that the progress which humanity has made since its earliest days, is so clear and so striking that any attempt to question it could be no more than an exercise in rhetoric. The argument therefore, is not to deny the fact of human progress, but to suggest that we might be more cautious in our conception of it.¹ The argument offered by Levi Strauss that there are really no superior cultures and his submission thus, that the west has become infatuated by notions of technological progress and technical superiority and has become oblivious to other aspects of existence, is an elaboration of this continuing dialogue of what is 'progress' or 'retrogression'.² It has been affirmed by others that while seemingly, religion, mythology, history, and philosophy as areas of study have lost their credibility, it is science that has triumphed in lodging the idea of natural 'progress' in the depths of human consciousness.³

In what can be considered as a continuation of this critique, the Dalai Lama contends that significantly, progress can only be measured by evaluating the 'happiness' it engenders to mankind.⁴ In this sense, clearly, for the Dalai Lama, 'progress' does not mean what prima facie, is discerned as material progress and what he describes as "numerical improvement." He says: "There is no doubt about the increase in our material progress and technology, but somehow that is not sufficient as we have not yet succeeded in bringing about peace and happiness or in overcoming suffering. We can only conclude that there must be something seriously wrong with our progress and development."⁵ In his words: "In many cases, progress has meant hardly anything more than greater numbers of opulent

houses in more cities, with more cars, driving between them. In his discussion of progress and development, he takes up the example of the modern industrial society. Describing it as a huge self-propelled machine, he suggests that such a society reduces human beings to insignificant components of this machine, with no choice but to move when the machine does. In his words: “clearly a major reason for ‘modern’ society’s devotion to material progress is the very success of science and technology”. He acknowledges the many positive results and outcomes from science, but suggests that the comforts and necessities which are the by-products of science, do not necessarily guarantee the ‘happiness’ that they promise to bring. He concludes therefore, that even though outwardly successful, the populations of such materially developed countries suffer from anxiety, discontent, frustration, uncertainty and depression. In his search for a utopian perfection, the Dalai Lama postulates the need for a society in which religion ought not to be considered archaic, and eventually brings out the significant role that religion and politics play in the contemporary times in order to show the important place that religion still has. What emerges in the writings of the Dalai Lama is the strong point of view that in spite of their differences, in terms of beliefs, rituals, practices and philosophic tenets, all religious traditions and all great religious leaders, seek in their own unique ways, as ought to seek, to improve the human condition, to enable and uplift human life, to affirm respect for human dignity and to see the interrelatedness of all life and of all constituents of the entire universe. In an example of religious motivation informing political motivation and political action, the Dalai Lama pleads for human welfare and for genuine efforts to save and serve society. To cite him: “We must remember that the different religions, ideologies,
and political systems of the world are meant for human beings to achieve happiness. We must not lose sight of this fundamental goal and at no time should we place means above ends; the supremacy of humanity over matter and ideology must always be maintained."\textsuperscript{11} It is with such a consideration that he questions the "popular" assumption of religion and ethics having no place in politics and that religious persons should seclude themselves as hermits. He considers such a view of religion as too one-sided as it lacks a proper perspective on the individual's relation to society and of the role of religion in an individual's daily life.\textsuperscript{12}

It has been suggested that the Dalai Lama's views on religion have immediate political connectiveness, and his pronouncements on political situations and dilemmas are founded on the central teachings of his religion. Thus "the worlds of religion and politics are brought together not through some successful effort at either intellectual or ethical synthesis, but because, at the core of life, from which station His Holiness speaks, they are in fact at one together."\textsuperscript{13} The Dalai Lama, like Gandhi, does not separate religion and politics and attempts to establish, that unless this truth dawns upon us, it would be impossible to live responsibly on this earth, or to establish happiness and peace in the world or even to bring about qualitative improvement in human society, if the two are totally separated. Therefore, the Dalai Lama expresses his disagreement with what he calls the "school of thought," which "warns the moralist to refrain from politics, as politics is devoid of ethics and moral principles." Considering that it is the instruments of our political culture which have been tampered with and have hence distorted the fundamental concepts to further selfish goals, therefore, it is not politics, that as a concept is 'dirty.' The Dalai Lama holds that should deep moral convictions, form the guidelines for the political practitioner, then, the society would reap many benefits. Therefore he considers and advocates the "functional importance of religion" for promoting human values in politics. In arguing thus, he

\textsuperscript{12} ibid., pp. 20-21.
questions the assumptions that hermetically seal off the domain of politics from what is according to him, erroneously, considered the hermitage of spirituality.  

I (a)

CRITIQUE OF PROGRESS AND RECKONING
THE IMPORTANCE OF INTERDEPENDENCE

In a striking argument the Dalai Lama brings forth his critique of “progress” and “modernity”. Citing the increasing urbanization of ‘modern’ society where a high concentration of people live in close proximity to one another he proffers the argument that ‘modern’ living is so organized that it demands the least possible ‘direct dependence’ on others. Although he chooses to see the positive points in the independence that have resulted with the advancement of science and technology he reckons that this has led to a ‘sense’ of individualism. Resultantly the cognizance of interconnection between persons has gone down. This has led to a way of thinking that considers the ‘other’ as dispensable. He says: “We have, in my view, created a society in which people find it harder and harder to show one another basic affection.” He observes further that progress may give material benefit for which a price needs to be paid: “In some parts of Southeast Asia, it is observable that, as prosperity has increased, traditional belief systems have begun to lose their influence over people.”

He makes a further comment on what this has done and informs on what these phenomena can do:

... In . . . the . . . way that physical disease reflects its environment, so it is with psychological and emotional suffering: it arises within the context of particular circumstances. Thus . . . we find stress-related disease. All this implies that there are strong reasons for supposing a link between our disproportionate emphasis on external progress and the unhappiness, the anxiety, and the lack of contentment of modern society.

In what can be interpreted as a warning, the Dalai Lama shows that worldviews generated from such phenomenon can lead to two situations. One, because of self-

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15 Tenzin Gyatso, His Holiness the Dalai Lama, n.4, p. 9.
16 Ibid., p. 9.
17 Ibid., p. 10.
reliance that science can generate, there is the increasing possibility of overlooking our dependence on others. Two, the strengthening of the belief that science has 'disproven' religion, can lead to a situation where there will be no final evidence for any 'spiritual' authority. Thence “morality” can easily become a matter of individual preference. It is in this context that the Dalai Lama connects the concept of Universal Responsibility to religion.

While Universal Responsibility as a concept seeks a deep relationship with various interrelated subjects in the Dalai Lama’s thought, it is his deep conviction that on the level of praxis, Universal Responsibility is fundamental to human survival. Universal responsibility in the context of religion for the Dalai Lama shows that religions are primarily meant for self-improvement and that a truly religious person belonging to any religious tradition is first and foremost ‘a human being with a good heart’. Such a person generates altruistic feelings through his good thoughts. Linking up the desire for peace with religion, the Dalai Lama tries to establish that since the desire for peace is universal therefore, if, interreligious contacts are established and promoted with noble intentions, a peaceful atmosphere can be created and conflicts, fears, suspicions and prejudices can be reduced to a great extent.

It should be understood that the Dalai Lama is seen criticizing science, primarily because he sees that given the extraordinary achievements that science has had, it has correspondingly not and cannot succeed in ‘telling’ us, how we ‘ought’ to act in a moral sense. Even though science and technology reflect the human desire to attain a better, more comfortable existence, the Dalai Lama suggests that:

We need also to recognize what happens when we rely too much on the external achievements of science. For example, as the influence of religion declines, there is mounting confusion with respect to the problem of how best we are to conduct ourselves in life. Now, many people, believing that science has ‘disproven’ religion, make the further assumption that because there appears to be no final evidence for any spiritual authority, morality, itself must be a matter of individual preference. ibid., p.11.

ibid., p.11.
Therefore, the Dalai Lama says, keeping in view the danger, which is that, in replacing religion as the final source of knowledge in popular estimation, science begins to look a bit like another religion itself. What needs however to be clearly understood, is that the Dalai Lama does not envision supplanting religion with science or vice-versa. In his view, what is to be avoided is the "intolerance of alternate views."\(^{20}\) In a turn of argument, the Dalai Lama contends that just as materialism does not signify success, similarly, spiritualism is not necessary for the development of man. He says:

Wealthy people, driven by the desire to accumulate greater wealth, realize soon enough that money alone does not give peace and mental satisfaction. With money also there is a problem... without money also ... . Use your wealth to be a happy person. That is the answer to a balance between spiritualism and materialism. Do something good for society, develop deeper human insight. Cultivate sensitivity and engage in social action which will benefit society and eliminate fear.\(^{21}\)

Further, even though he is a votary of the opinion that with 'urbanization,' 'disharmony' has been generated, he is careful enough to insist that his idea is not to idealize "old ways of life" and thus he is also critical enough to realize that the apparent "high level of cooperation we find in underdeveloped rural communities may be based more on necessity that on goodwill."\(^{22}\) In a typical turn to his argument which reveals his intent to bridge the 'ancient' with the 'modern', he emphasizes that 'the challenge we face is therefore to find some means of enjoying the same degree of harmony and tranquility as those more traditional communities while benefiting fully from the material development of the world as we find it at the dawn of a new millennium.'\(^{23}\) The Dalai Lama's 'intolerance of alternate views' argument comes in handy here, and just as he argues against idealizing old ways of life, in a similar way he argues against being intolerant of material progress (which

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\(^{20}\) ibid., p.12.
\(^{22}\) Tenzin Gyatso His Holiness the Dalai Lama, n.4, p.14.
\(^{23}\) ibid., p.14.
he concedes, has its benefits). The same stands true for religion as well in his view.

I (b)

PROGRESS VS. RELIGION: ARE THEY MUTUALLY EXCLUSIVE? THE IDEA OF ‘SPIRITUAL’ CONTRIBUTION TO SOCIAL PROGRESS IN THE DALAI LAMA’S WRITINGS

Even if the Dalai Lama holds the idea that material progress alone is not sufficient to achieve an ideal society, yet, he argues that mental development should be in harmony with material development. It is with such a consideration that he juxtaposes ‘original Marxism’ and Mahayana Buddhism in a comparative framework. He contends that even when Marxism and Buddhism have many differences, this should not detract from their commonalities. The first commonality is their mutual emphasis on the common good of society. Hence, if everything depends on one’s own karma in Buddhism; which is linked to individual motivation, in a similar way, in Marxist or Communist theory, everything, depends on one’s own ‘labour’. In his own words:

In Buddhism, it is explained that everything depends on one’s own karma. This means that one’s life situation in the present depends upon one’s actions and their motivations in the past and that one’s future is thus capable of being moulded through engaging in salutary actions with a pure motivation. Similarly, in Communist or Marxist Theory, everything is said to depend on one’s own labour.

Secondly, both in Marxism as well as in Buddhism, all practices are seen as a means for serving others. Whereas Marxist economic theory is related with ethical principles in the sense that its prime concern is with the use of resources and wealth, not their mere accumulation; in Buddhism, the practice of considering the needs of other beings, is stressed to such an extent, that sacrificing individual welfare for the benefit of the majority of sentient beings is laid greater stress upon.

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24 ibid., p.15.
26 ibid., p.64
In what can be termed, as unique to his thought, the Dalai Lama visualizes Marxist Theory as not absolutely anti-religious. He says:

Since the thrust of Marxist thought is not absolutely anti-religious, there is no point in religious person’s viewing Marxism as anti-religious, creating tension and distrust . . . Marxists, out of ignorance and lack of personal experience, see religion as totally counterproductive, which is wrong. A real Marxist must discard narrow and dogmatic attitudes, and be open to the values of spiritual teachings.\(^\text{27}\)

He postulates that the original theme of communism was of anti-exploitation and anti-corruption, which does not necessarily entail that it was anti-religion, according to him. He suggests that just as some religious institutions have come to involve corruption and thus have to be opposed, in the similar vein although Marxism arguably has good points, the implementation of some of its practices are corrupt and therefore have to be opposed. It is with this consideration that he makes the suggestion that “...distinction must be made between systems and their practitioners.”\(^\text{28}\) Such a distinction has been made in the Dalai Lama’s writings too, and here, it would be apt to state, particularly in reference to religion and Marxist debate, that the Dalai Lama’s writings reveal, that eventhough the earlier Dalai Lama was unsure of Marxism, his thought has evolved to a stage of maturity and strategic correctness as the later Dalai Lama. (For an elaboration of the ‘earlier’ and ‘later’ Dalai Lama, as perceived by the researcher, please refer to Chapter-1). His earlier position is apparent in the following lines: “... the threat to us was not


\(^{28}\) ibid., p.19.

In fact the Dalai Lama sees Marxism and Buddhism so closely aligned that he actually envisages a society where the two can live together in harmony. In an interview, the Dalai Lama responds to the question “ Have you a dream of a society where Marxism and Buddhism may live together?” The Dalai Lama answers: “Yes it is possible in Marxist dominated Asian parts. In these countries, there are traces of Buddhism. So I think that in these countries, it will be very fruitful to have a dialogue between Marxism and Buddhism and particularly Mahayana Buddhism. It is because Marxism is running towards failure. Marxism is wasting energy to destructive side instead of the constructive side and this destruction has broken all limits. It is destroying trust between man and wife, child and parents and so on. It is the failure of Marxism. Now it is clear that real communism is not the child of force but it is created by making people give up selfishness. The edifice of real communism can stand only on altruism for masses’ benefit. Gun cannot do this. China is a glaring example of this. All their efforts of force and fear have failed to bring real communism in China and a slight liberalization used there give rise to corruption. It is therefore essential that altruism like teachings of Mahayana Buddhism must be preached
only more powerful, it was also different in its very nature . . . we were threatened not only with military domination, but also with the domination of an alien materialistic creed which, so far as any of us understood it in Tibet, seemed totally abhorrent."

Arguing from the historical angle, he says:

History has shown that no single political, economic or social ideology has been sufficient. So it seems worthwhile for the two great systems of this large expanse of the world to take point from each other. Certainly, Buddhist Theory is not sufficient by itself for socio-economic policy in this or the next century; it can take many points from Marxist, Socialist and Democratic systems. Similarly, those systems can benefit from many points in Buddhist Theory, especially in terms of the development of socially beneficial attitudes. Such a partnership would help millions of people.

It is with this stance that the Dalai Lama has managed to connect religion and the secular/political in one place.

II (a)

‘NON-RENUNCIATION’ IN THE ENGAGED ETHIC OF THE DALAI LAMA

The Dalai Lama often stresses the notion that compassion is basic to all Buddhist practice, and insists that direct engagement with other people and their problems is necessary in the development of genuine compassion. Too many Buddhists, he believes, withdraw from the world and cultivate their own minds, and although, this is an important first step for many, he also urges Buddhists to become involved in the world. He says:

In the first stage, sometimes we need isolation while pursuing our own inner development; however, after you have some confidence, some strength, you must remain with contact, and serve society in any field — health, education, politics, or whatever. There are people who call themselves religious-minded, trying to show this by dressing in a peculiar manner, maintaining a peculiar way of life,

through love and reason and not by force. It shall achieve ideal socialism in China." Ather Faruqui, "Practising Non-Violence," Thirdworld (Karachi), July 1990, p. 44.


and isolating themselves from the rest of society. This is wrong. A scripture of mind purification (mind-training) says, ‘Transform your inner viewpoint, but leave your external appearance as it is’. This is important because the very purpose of practicing the great vehicle is service to others, you should not isolate yourselves from society. In order to serve, in order to help, you must remain in society.  

The Dalai Lama insists that most Buddhists should strive to achieve a balance between contemplation and social activism since both are essential components of a healthy spiritual life. He assesses that for most people no amount of contemplative activity can take the place of engagement in the world. On the other hand, he cautions that activism alone tends to become sterile and can lead to negative emotions such as frustration, anger, and hatred. However, in his view renunciation does not mean physically separating oneself from worldly activities, but rather cultivating an attitude of ‘cognitive detachment’ while still working for others. He suggests that this is the proper attitude of a Bodhisattva. Therefore the suggestion is given that the Bodhisattva, while working within the world for the benefit of others does so, without getting dragged down by its negative elements.

It has been suggested that the Dalai Lama’s vision of Buddhist practice has had a profound impact on many of his followers, who see their social activism on behalf of the Tibet cause as being intimately linked with their Buddhist practice, a sentiment that has been echoed by several individuals. Although a number of Buddhists are involved in the various movements concerned with Tibet, some indicate that their activism interferes with their Buddhist practice. This sentiment is assessed to be an exception rather than a rule. In most cases, activist Buddhists have developed ‘cognitive strategies’ for integrating social activity and religious practice. Jeffrey Hopkins’ statement on this issue expresses ideas held in common with many other Buddhists working for the Free Tibet movement: “There is no question that activism is religious practice, and it’s a way of putting into deed,

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b) ibid., p.82, as cited in Christopher S. Queen (ed.), Engaged Buddhism in the West, Boston: Wisdom Publications, 2000, p. 231.

33 The Bodhisattva is a Buddhist practitioner who is committed to achieving Buddhahood in order to benefit others. This is the ideal of Mahayana Buddhism. Christopher S. Queen (ed.), Engaged Buddhism in the West, Boston: Wisdom Publications, 2000, pp. 231 & 243.

attitudes like compassion for others that otherwise are just verbal. It gives . . . plenty of opportunities for acting together with other people and through acting, seeking to counteract what some other people have done.”

II (b)

DRAWING THE LAW OF KARMA TO OUR DAILY LIVES: TECHNIQUES FOR BETTERMENT OF HUMANKIND

Pleasure and pain come from the former actions (karma's) of an individual. Thus, The Dalai Lama explains karma in one short sentence: If you act well, things will be good, and if you act badly, things will be bad. Karma he explains, means ‘action.’ From the viewpoint of ‘actions’, he explains that karmas or actions are of three types: physical, verbal and mental. From the viewpoint of their effects, actions are either virtuous, non-virtuous or neutral. In terms of time, there are two types of actions — actions of intention that occur while thinking to do something and the intended actions which are the expressions of those mental motivations in physical or verbal action. Whether these actions become good or bad depends on the motivation of the actor. “If I speak from a good motivation out of sincerity, respect, and love for others, my actions are good, virtuous. If I act from a motivation of pride, hatred, cynicism, and so forth, then my verbal and physical actions become non-virtuous.” Without leaving it at the metaphysical plane, the Dalai Lama draws the law of karma to our daily lives by contending that “the important point is that such presentations of Buddhist Theories about actions can make a positive contribution to human society. It is my hope that whether religious or not, we will study each other’s system to gather helpful ideas and techniques for the betterment of humankind.”

However, the point that needs clarification is that even though the Dalai Lama emphasizes the importance of religion, his consideration is not for the institutionalized religion. In fact, what he has tried to bring forth in his writings is the spiritual aspect, which he emphasizes, is present in all religions. Thus, it

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37 Ibid., p. 28.
becomes important to understand the distinction he draws between religion and spirituality in this sense.

II (c)

THE DOMAINS OF ‘RELIGION’ AND ‘SPIRITUALITY’ IN THE DALAI LAMA’S THOUGHT

The Dalai Lama draws a clear distinction between religion as an institution and spirituality as a mental attitude. By doing so, he reaches three conclusions: one, that even though the teachings of Buddha are relevant and useful for humanity, enabling people to lead constructive and satisfying lives just as every other religion does, he concludes that it is still not mandatory for anyone to be religious in the conventional sense, although he considers it important, to be spiritual.

Buddhism for the Dalai Lama is a rational, deep and a sophisticated approach to human life, which does not emphasize something external, but rather, emphasizes personal responsibility for inner development. He quotes Buddha’s teaching: “You are your own master; things depend upon you. I am a teacher and like a doctor, I can give you effective medicine, but you have to take it yourself and look after yourself”.38

He says clearly, that initially, Shakyamuni Buddha was Siddhartha, an ordinary being troubled by delusion and engaging in harmful thought and wrong actions. In other words, according to the Dalai Lama, he was an ordinary man. However, with the help of certain teachings and teachers, he gradually purified himself and in the end became enlightened. From here the Dalai Lama draws conclusion that “through this same causal process, we too can become fully enlightened.”39

In attempting to bridge the gap between material progress and spiritual development, he concludes that although both are important, we need not choose one over the other, but should attempt to balance the two. In fact, he asserts that with the ever-growing impact of science on our lives, religion and spirituality have

38 ibid., pp. 29-30.
39 ibid., p. 30.
a greater role to play in order to “remind us of our humanity.” Seeing no contradiction between the two, he says that both science as well as the teachings of the Buddha, tell us of the fundamental unity of all things. Drawing an analogy from the Buddha’s writings, he says:

Buddha always emphasized a balance of wisdom and compassion; a good brain and a good heart should work together. Placing importance just on the intellect and ignoring the heart can create more problems and more suffering in the world. On the other hand, if we emphasize only the heart and ignore the brain, then there is not much difference between humans and animals. These two must be developed in balance, and when they are, the result is material progress accompanied by good spiritual development. Heart and mind working in harmony will yield a truly peaceful and friendly human family.

This stance has an interesting interpretation. Clearly, the Dalai Lama recognizes two domains, viz., the rational and the emotional. He would term these domains as one belonging to the ‘mind’ and the other to the ‘heart’. According to him a balance between the two is required. In other words, he extols the goodness in human beings, which he rates higher in comparison to having a religious or a ritualistic attitude. He makes an observation that, in the ‘developed’ world, the influence of religion on people’s lives is marginal. And thence he concludes that “...we humans can live quite well without recourse to religious faith.” Despite the fact that he is a religious leader, the Dalai Lama is of the opinion that ‘religion’ is not mandatory for human survival. To him, it is ‘basic human qualities’ that ought to take precedence:

...there are more than 5 billion of us on the planet. Three billion have no sort of religion. Of the 2 billion who call themselves religious, I would say that only a billion of the follower of this or that religion are a sincere believer. One billion in five that means a minority...everything starts with us, with each one of us. The indispensable qualities are peace of mind and compassion... we can

41 The Fourteenth Dalai Lama His Holiness Tenzin Gyatso, n.36, pp. 30-31.
42 Tenzin Gyatso His Holiness the Dalai Lama, n.4, pp. 19-20.
43 ibid., p. 20.
reject every form of religion, but we can’t reject and cast off compassion and peace of mind.44

II (d)

NO PLACE FOR DOGMATISM

One distinct feature in the thought of the Dalai Lama is his flexible attitude to religion. What rules his thought on religion, are his considerations on tolerance of dissent. His thought lacks the polemic rigidity that dogmatism would otherwise entail. It is in this sense that he is also not strictly attached to the letter of Buddhist scriptures and responds to queries of whether moving away from the ‘words’ of the scriptures, amounts to sacrilege with: “On the contrary, you would have to be crazy to maintain them with all your might in a world swept away by the movement of time. For example, if science shows that the scriptures are mistaken, the scriptures have to be changed.”45 The scriptures, venerable and sacred as they are, are relative and impermanent, like all things for him. Commenting on this, Carrière says:

This is certainly a point in Buddhism that at first surprises and then attracts us. In the monotheistic religions that constitute one tradition we are used to scriptures revealed, now by God now by one of his angels or prophets. In any event, they come from somewhere else. The man who proclaimed them or wrote them down was nothing but the spokesman of a supposed beyond. It was, it still is in many cases, out of the question, unimaginable, to modify even so slightly a saying held to be strictly divine. There is no such thing in Buddhism. It must be repeated that Buddha drew his four

44 Dalai Lama & Jean Claude Carrière, The Power of Buddhism, Dublin: Newleaf, 1988, p.86. (However, he does not elucidate anywhere as to how he derive or reach the particular figures mentioned).

45 Furthering this argument the Dalai Lama again expresses a similar thought in the following words: “Religion is a question of individual freedom. Basically, I cannot say that humanity needs religion because observation proves that we can survive perfectly well without it. In fact, a great majority of the 5.7 billion humans on this planet are non-believers. Still, I do not think that religion has an important role in human societies. But I normally make a distinction between religion and spirituality. Spirituality has two levels: internal and external. The external level is simply to remain a kind, warm-hearted human being who does not harm others, who is law abiding, and does not lie or kill, as we mentioned earlier. We can do that without belonging to any religion. Inner spirituality helps develop and strengthen our intrinsic qualities and in this sense I think that religion has an important role to play, since it gives hope to some individuals. In this way, the major religious traditions have great potential. It is wrong to assume that all human requirements can be fulfilled by external means, without using our inner qualities. As human beings, a positive call is essential for survival. Religions can help with this.” His Holiness the Dalai Lama and Fabien Ouaki, Imagine all the People: A Conversation with the Dalai Lama on Money, Politics and Life As It Could Be, Boston: Wisdom Publications, 1999, pp. 55-56.

fundamental truths and all the teachings that followed from deep within him. He never stopped saying that this teaching had to be meticulously verified at every moment by experience, and by personal experience at that. Even though in certain currents of Buddhism and in Hinduism (which saw in Siddhartha the ninth avatar of Vishnu, after Krishna), Buddha has sometimes been enlisted in the ranks of the gods, he remains today a human being. 46

It is in such a spirit that the Dalai Lama believes that permanent recourse to religion can paralyze us. It is his conviction that above all, the ideal position to be in, is in remaining open and sensitive. Thus, if one has the means, one has to show others, what must be done. It is in this spirit that he considers the old religious prohibitions to be harmful sometimes. However, he expresses his inability to actually handle them and asks, “But how to bend them? With what weapons?” 47

In acknowledgement of the special responsibility he has towards the Tibetans, being a Dalai Lama, and even more of being a monk, he recognizes his special cause of fostering inter-religious harmony. By extending the same logic, he cognizes that as a human being he has a much larger responsibility towards the entire human family. Even though ‘the earlier Dalai Lama’ was less flexible and believed that Buddhism was the best way, ‘the later Dalai Lama’ finds a larger concern in serving all humanity, without appealing to religious faith. 48 Though the earlier Dalai Lama had tried to advocate proselytization, the later Dalai Lama concedes that this was due to ignorance. 49 Drawing a distinction between the ‘religious’ and the ‘spiritual,’ the Dalai Lama shows that it is neither dogmatism nor religious fanaticism, that he advocates. On the contrary, his emphasis is on looking for universal ethical principles in all religions. These are the spiritual principles, because all religions emphasize similar values; therefore he sees no use in proselytization. Even though he contends that his philosophy of developing a “good heart” is based on core Buddhist principles, he also believes that this is in accordance with the best principles of all religions. 50 He says: “I believe all religions pursue the same goals, that of cultivating human goodness and bringing

46 ibid., p. 39.
47 ibid., p. 40.
48 The Fourteenth Dalai Lama His Holiness Tenzin Gyatso, n.36, p. 29.
49 Also see the researcher’s interview with His Holiness the XIV Dalai Lama in Appendix-I.
happiness to all human beings. Though the means might appear different, the ends are the same," and therefore he concludes that all religions have a similar motivation— that of love and compassion.

II (e)

NO PROSELYTIZATION

In what is deeply reflective of his tolerant views on religion, the Dalai Lama takes a categorical stand against proselytization. In what has been an area of much debate and debacle the Dalai Lama has taken a middle stand which is based on respect for all religions. He insists that respecting other systems even when they are separate, enriches one's own system or one's practice of one's religion. Comparing the varying tastes that people exhibit in regard to various things, he suggests that just as "various people have various tastes...different religions are suitable for different people." In the context of Buddhism in Tibet, he says: "We believe in oracles, omens, interpretations of dreams, reincarnation. But these beliefs, which for us are certainties, are not something we try to impose on others in any way. I repeat: we do not want to convert people. Buddhism's main attachment is to the facts. It is an experience, a personal experience even." His anti-proselytization stand is evident in the following observation made about him:

...The Dalai Lama has been able to reach beyond his Buddhist devotees to find a universal relevance. He has followers from among the Catholic, Jewish, Muslim, agnostic, and even atheist communities. Those who revere him do not necessarily adopt Buddhist practices, but virtually all derive spiritual [italics added]

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52 The Fourteenth Dalai Lama His Holiness Tenzin Gyatso, n. 36, p. 21.
53 ibid., p. 49.
54 ibid., p. 29.
and mental enrichment from his insights on daily living, inner peace, compassion, peace and justice, and the environment.\textsuperscript{56}

He acknowledges that he does not give importance to propagating the Dharma (i.e., the Buddhism). This he says is in consonance with the Buddhist tradition that does not seek people to change their religion, as this would be considered a lack of respect for others. However, if someone were to approach him, seeking teachings, he feels that it would be his responsibility to concede to such a request. Still he maintains that it is better for people to follow their own tradition.\textsuperscript{57} He also attributes practical reasons for why he does not consider proselytization cogent for the present times. Giving the instance of the Jewish community, he says that the Jewish community is small and if some of its best scholars are attracted to Buddhism, it may cause a practical problem.

Previously, different religious communities were more isolated, and as long as Buddhists remained in their countries, Muslims in theirs, and Christians in theirs, it did not matter if they had one religion or a specific concept of God. He understands that the situation is very different today. He says: “now, if I try to propagate Buddhism while other religious leaders try to spread Catholicism or Islam, sooner or later there will be a clash.” It is perhaps from here that one can draw the crux of the Dalai Lama’s humanistic religion. In his own words: “religion is important for humanity, but it should evolve with humanity.”\textsuperscript{58} It is with this consideration that he announces that the first priority is to establish and develop the

\textsuperscript{56} Mathew E. Bunson (ed.), \textit{The Dalai Lama’s Book of Wisdom}, London: Rider, 1997, p.X.

\textsuperscript{57} Explaining this, he says: “In different places at different times, according to local conditions and circumstances, different masters arise and teach different philosophies: in just this way over time were born, for example, the Buddhist, the Christian and the Muslim worlds. For this reason, I feel it is basically safer and better to follow one’s own traditional religion because I have noticed that some Westerners who have hurried to adopt the Buddhadharma as a personal religion have only become more confused.” His Holiness the Dalai Lama, “Address to the Buddhist Society”, \textit{The Middle Way}, (London), vol. 71, no. 3, November 1996, p. 147.

The Dalai Lama says, “All religions are different with different origins, philosophies and practice, but all provide paths by which mankind can come to truth.” Olaf Caroe, “Tibet and the Dalai Lama,” \textit{The Tibet Journal}, (Dharamsala, Library of Tibetan Works and Archives), vol.II, no. 4, Winter 1977, p.11.

principle of pluralism in all religious traditions. The next step he states categorically is to accept that the idea of propagating religion is outdated.

The Dalai Lama is careful to not get accused for proselytization. He says:

...I recognize the wide variety of mental dispositions among human beings. This is totally acceptable to me. The Buddha himself clearly acknowledged that some of his followers believed in the bodhisattva's path and others did not... this is why there are four schools of Buddhists thought with many contradictions between them. The Buddha created all these schools to accommodate the different mental dispositions of his followers. If in Buddhism alone so many disposition exist, then there must be many more in the human family. Buddhism alone cannot fulfill all these different needs.  

Therefore, the Dalai Lama makes it clear that he would not like people converting to Buddhism as it can cause many problems and result in a clash of cultural and religious traditions. It has been seen that this "liberal compromise," which in the present context the Dalai Lama emphasizes, makes Buddhism attractive to Westerners who can hold on to the comfort of their original faiths while adopting elements of Buddhism that they find attractive. Scholars explain as to how this liberal attitude towards conversion, has made Buddhism much more mainstream in western society. According to Alexander Berzin:

There are many programmes starting up with American corporations that employ various Buddhist meditation techniques to help relieve stress among their employees...Thich Nhat Hanh has started a programme called 'Engaged Buddhism' that uses Buddhism in social work, like meditation programmes for prisons and Buddhist hospices for people dying of AIDS and cancer. There is even a Jewish revival movement in America that is drawing from Buddhism in order to emphasize spirituality within Judaism.  

The Dalai Lama acknowledges that this is the way he would like to see Buddhism work in the West. He advises: "I... think it is very important to remember that you are a Westerner. Your social and cultural background and your environment are different from mine. If you want to practice an Eastern

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59 ibid., p. 57.
philosophy, such as Tibetan Buddhism, you should take the essence and try to adopt it to your cultural background and the conditions here. As you engage in spiritual practice, for example, Buddhism over the course of time, you can gradually integrate it with your own culture and the values here, just as in the past occurred with Indian Buddhism, Tibetan Buddhism, and so on. There must gradually evolve a Western Buddhism or an American Buddhism. At the same time, because of his deep regard for all the spiritual traditions, he does not see the need for a ‘single’ world religion, which would, as claimed by some, establish a unified single world religion.

II (f)

PROSELYTIZATION — CONNECTING HUMAN RIGHTS & RELIGION

The Dalai Lama, although he is an advocate of universal human rights, and disagrees with the Asian view of Human Rights kind of arguments — at another level realizes that the universal criteria would be dangerous if applied to religion. Thus even though he advocates Universal Human Rights, he argues against the universalizable vision of religion or of having a single world religion. It has been seen clearly that he aims at non-proselytization and thus it follows logically that for him all religions are important and there is no requirement for a single — ‘one’ world religion. He says: “Forming a world religion is not desirable.” He cogently argues against the enterprise that would suggest the ‘unification of all religions’ under one global umbrella. It is his firm belief that different religions are needed, since a single tradition cannot satisfy the needs and the mental dispositions of the great variety of human beings. He says: “I believe that we need different religious traditions, because a single tradition cannot satisfy the needs and mental dispositions of the great variety of human beings.” Consequently even though he argues for equality at the level of rights, by virtue of this, he extends the same logic to the sphere of religion where having rights, entail a non-coerced situation, in which religion is a personal choice. If the same logic were to be extended, then,

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62 The Fourteenth Dalai Lama His Holiness Tenzin Gyatso, n.36, p.49.
63 Creeds of Our Time, Delhi: Full Circle Publishing and the Foundation for Universal Responsibility of His Holiness the Dalai Lama, 2000, p. IX.
proselytization too in his terms, would automatically become coercion and thus a violation of human rights. Says the Dalai Lama:

I believe the protection of religious freedoms and the diversity of our many different faiths is a matter of our fundamental Human Rights. Beyond a matter of personal or national preference, it is obliged by international law and convention. We have no alternative but to live in religious harmony. For the same reasons, if the proponents of different religious systems are unable to show each other respect, they must at least observe mutual tolerance. 64

Arguments bring to light, that even though the Tibetans were ignorant of other religions, they were tolerant of them and never sought to run them down. As a matter of fact, since they had no problems with these other religions, they did not find the need to address all those needs. The Dalai Lama says:

We Tibetans had, of course, heard of other religions. But what little we knew about them came from Tibetan translations of secondary Buddhist sources. Naturally, these focused on those aspects of other religions, which are more open to debate from a Buddhist perspective. This was not because their authors wished deliberately to caricature their opponents. Rather, it reflected the fact that they had no need to address all those aspects with which they had no argument. 65

With time the Dalai Lama has come to recognize the value of each of the 'major faith traditions' and his writings reveal his immense respect for them. Added to all this, is the fact that Buddhism for him, has remained the most precious 'path.' According to him, it corresponds best with his personality. It is however, the 'universal ethical principles' that he considers to be paramount, in order to achieve the happiness that everyone aspires for, and he makes it clear that in no way is he trying to propagate Buddhism by stealth. 66

65 Tenzin Gyatso His Holiness the Dalai Lama, n.4, p. 21.
66 ibid., p. 22.
Reiterating what was said earlier [in section II (c)], in no unclear terms, the Dalai Lama states that ‘religion’ by itself is something we can actually do without; while what he qualifies as spirituality, which he takes to be a concern with qualities of the human spirit – such as love and compassion, patience, tolerance, forgiveness, contentment, a sense of responsibility, a sense of harmony – all of which bring happiness to both self and others, he considers as indispensable. Thus he says: ‘While ritual and prayer, along with the questions of nirvana and salvation, are directly connected with religious faith, these inner qualities need not be, however. There is thus no reason why the individual should not develop them, even to a high degree, without recourse to any religious or metaphysical belief system.  

The unifying characteristic of the qualities described above as ‘spiritual’ in the Dalai Lama’s thought, may be some level of concern for the well being of others. In Tibetan, it is described as “shen-pen kyi-sem,” meaning “the thought to be of help to others.” Similarly, the spiritual qualities noted by the Dalai Lama are implicit in having concern for others. Thus he says:

Spiritual practice . . . involves, on the one hand, acting out of concern for others’ well being. On the other, it entails transforming ourselves so that we become more readily disposed to do so . . . My call for a spiritual revolution is thus not a call for a religious revolution. Nor is it a reference to a way of life that is somehow otherworldly, still less to something magical or mysterious. Rather, it is a call for a radical reorientation away from our habitual preoccupation with self. It is a call to turn toward the wider community of beings with whom we are connected, and for conduct, which recognizes others’ interests alongside our own.

It is at this point that the engaged ethic in the Dalai Lama’s consideration of religion emerges. It can be clearly discerned that the Dalai Lama’s religious concerns and spiritual concerns are two categories and to him it is the ‘spiritual quest’, be it at the individual or social plane, that enhances human life and reduces suffering. It is at the social level that he would suggest the idea of spiritualizing political life.

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67 ibid., p. 23.
68 ibid., p. 23.
69 ibid., p. 24.
III

SPIRITUALIZING POLITICAL LIFE: THE DALAI LAMA ON THE RELATION BETWEEN RELIGION AND POLITICS AND THE FUNCTIONAL IMPORTANCE OF RELIGION

The Dalai Lama’s contribution to religion, primarily consists in conceiving a humanistic religion that centers almost entirely on man and his life in this world. According to him, religion should pervade all our activities and cannot be pursued in seclusion from one’s fellow beings or even as separate from life’s other activities. It is in consonance with the integral totality of his thought and based on the logic that human life cannot and should not be segregated into separate compartments, that the Dalai Lama conceptualizes religion and politics in his weltanschauung. A well-known concept since ancient times in Tibet, “chos-srid-zung-bre" literally means “the harmonious blend of religion and politics.” According to the Dalai Lama:

...spirituality is far more important for a politician than for someone who remains secluded in the mountains seeking spiritual awakening. A hermit, even if he is not involved in spirituality, will not be able to harm the public, but the same cannot be said for a politician. A politician is an important figure in society and has a great need for spirituality. If such a person’s mind becomes crooked, then he or she can be truly harmful to many people. Therefore, it is essential that leaders of nations cultivate peace of mind, an altruistic attitude and a true sense of universal responsibility.

In the Dalai Lama’s vision, all religions exist to serve and help man and therefore in his opinion, any divorce from politics, is to forsake a powerful instrument for social welfare. He suggests that religion and politics, is a useful combination for the welfare of man when tempered by correct ethical concepts and a minimum of self-interest. Thus, he argues against the opinion of ‘spiritual people’ who are voicing their concern about the intermingling of politics with religion, since they fear the violation of ethics by the corruption of politics.

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71 His Holiness the Dalai Lama with Fabien Ouaki, n. 58, p. 18.
According to them politics contaminates the ‘purity’ of religion, an argument, that the Dalai Lama clearly, does not share.\(^72\)

It is here again, that the engaged ethic in the Dalai Lama’s thought comes to the fore vis-à-vis man’s relation to the society and through the role of politics in social life. He makes it clear that ‘a man of religion’ should not isolate himself from society:

In the correlation between ethics and politics should deep moral convictions form the guidelines for the practical practitioners, man and his society will reap far-reaching benefits. It is an absurd assumption that religion and morality have no place in politics and that a man of religion and a believer in morality should seclude himself as a hermit. These ideas lack proper perspective vis-à-vis man’s relation to his society and the role of politics in our lives. Strong moral ethics are as concomitantly crucial to a man of politics as they are to a man of religion, for dangerous consequences are foreseen when our politicians and those who rule forget their moral principles and convictions . . . We need human qualities such as moral scruples, compassion and humility . . . The functional importance of religion and social institutions towards promoting these qualities thus assumes a serious responsibility and all efforts should be concentrated sincerely in fulfilling these needs.\(^73\)

IV
SUGGESTING PRACTICAL WAYS FOR RESOLVING RELIGIOUS CONFLICTS WITH RELIGION AS THE TOOL

THE REALISTIC VIEW OF RELIGION

The Dalai Lama maintains that every major religion of the world – Buddhism, Christianity, Confucianism, Hinduism, Islam, Jainism, Judaism, Sikhism, Taoism, Zoroastrianism – all have similar ideals of love, and the same goal of benefiting humanity through spiritual practice and the same effect of making their followers into better human beings. All religions teach moral precepts for perfecting the functions of mind, body and speech. All teach us not to lie or steal or take other’s lives, and so on. He thus contends that the common goal of all moral precepts laid down by the great teachers of humanity, is “unselfishness” and


\(^{73}\) ibid., p.60.
says that each religion, teaches a path leading to a spiritual state that is “peaceful,” “disciplined,” “ethical” and “wise” and each religion agrees upon the necessity to control the undisciplined mind, that harbours selfishness and other roots of trouble.\textsuperscript{74}

THE METAPHYSICAL VIEW OF RELIGION

According to the Dalai Lama, the most important thing is to look for the purpose of religion and not at the details of theology or metaphysics, which can lead to mere intellectualism. It is his belief that all the major religions of the world can contribute to world peace and work together for the benefit of humanity if they put aside subtle metaphysical differences, which according to him, are really the “internal business of each religion.”\textsuperscript{75} And thus even though he take cognizance of the metaphysical foundations of different religions, he bridges the chasm between metaphysics and reality through his conviction, in which all religions essentially behold a message that is similar. He says: “Differences of dogma may be ascribed to differences of time and circumstance as well as cultural influences; indeed, there is no end to scholastic argument when we consider the purely metaphysical side of religion. On the contrary, he considers it is much more beneficial to implement in one’s daily life, the shared percepts for goodness taught by all religions, rather than to argue about differences in their approach.”\textsuperscript{76}

At the same time doctrinal differences that exist among various faiths also do not entail that a ‘universal belief’ or a universally accepted religion is needed. In fact he insists that humanity needs all the world’s religions to suit the ways of life, diverse spiritual needs, and inherited national traditions of individual human beings.\textsuperscript{77} His insistence that all the religions are needed for establishing peace in the world is expressed in the following statement:

\begin{quote}
We practitioners of different faiths can work together for world peace when we view different religions as essentially instruments to
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\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{75} ibid., p. 267.
\item \textsuperscript{76} ibid., p. 265.
\item \textsuperscript{77} ibid., p. 266.
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develop a good heart – love and respect for others, a true sense of community. The most important thing is to look at the purpose of religion and not at the details of theology or metaphysics, which can lead to mere intellectualism. I believe that all the major religions of the world can contribute to world peace and work together for the benefit of humanity if we put aside subtle metaphysical differences... 78

SUGGESTING PRACTICAL WAYS OF RESOLVING INTER-RELIGIOUS CONFLICTS

Whereas on the one hand, religion promotes human happiness, at the same time it is also a source of discord, conflict and blood-shed. The Dalai Lama comprehends that a choice must be made to maintain and nurture religious traditions, while trying to minimize conflicts. Therefore, he advocates interfaith dialogue in order to improve closer understanding between different religious traditions. He says: “... dialogue... builds a healthy spirit of harmony on the basis of mutual understanding. With full knowledge of our differences and similarities, we have developed mutual respect mutual understanding,” referring to the Buddhist-Christian dialogue that he and Thomas Merton, a Christian practitioner, had.79 The Dalai Lama has clearly stated that what is ultimately important is the imbidding of secular, spiritual ethics, and that there is actually no need to focus on religion. Only he insists that there should be some way of increasing deeper human values, compassion, sharing, responsibility and concern. “It is not necessary to have religious faith,” he says.80 In understanding that religion has been one of the major causes of conflict throughout human history, he even abandons the concept of religion if all it means is to create conflicts. But on the other hand, he also discerns that religion has the capacity to and can play the positive role of engendering moral and ethical values for leading happier lives. Thus he says, “Religion can go a long way in promoting world peace and happiness.”81

The Dalai Lama thinks that it is very important that religious leaders and practitioners should occasionally meet and sit together and get acquainted on a

78 ibid., p.267.
81 ibid., p. 157.
personal level; he considers it important in the political sphere for leaders to get to know each others, because their personal relationships have a great bearing on the decisions they take. He holds the same view in regard to religious practitioners, viewing the establishment of such personal relations based on a close personal acquaintance, to be of profound significance.\textsuperscript{82} Citing his own example, he says:

\ldots I meet with other religious leaders as often as possible. We walk together; we visit one religious site or another, whatever tradition it may belong to. And there we meditate together; we share a moment of silence. I get a great sense of well-being from that. I continue to believe that in the name of religion, we are making progress by comparison with the beginning of the century.\textsuperscript{83}

Taking a clear stand against instances where religious faith is misused and made a basis for conflict and violence, he promulgates "active steps" to create harmony and mutual respect amongst different religious traditions. In the preface to "Creeds of our Times,"\textsuperscript{84} he charts out the path to religious harmony. According to the Dalai Lama, religious harmony can be initiated at various levels:

1. Firstly, he suggests that meetings should be arranged between scholars and academicians, where the differences and similarities of different traditions can be discussed. "One type of dialogue involves scholars meeting in a more academic way to clarify the differences and similarities between their traditions. This type of dialogue provides a valuable way to help people understand and appreciate each other's religions and build bridges between different religious communities."\textsuperscript{85}

2. Secondly, meetings between serious practitioners of the various spiritual traditions can be arranged, in which they can exchange their inner experiences. In his view: "This is a very powerful and extremely helpful way to develop respect for spiritual paths other than your own. In my own experience, it was meeting profound practitioners of other religious traditions that really opened my eyes to the value of other spiritual traditions."\textsuperscript{86}

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\textsuperscript{82} "Universal Responsibility and Religion," n.64, p. 203.
\textsuperscript{83} Dalai Lama and Jean-Claude Carrière, n.55, pp. 10-11.
\textsuperscript{84} Creeds of Our Times, n.63, pp.VII-X.
\textsuperscript{85} His Holiness the Dalai Lama, n. 79, p. 20.
\textsuperscript{86} Creeds of Our Times, n.63, p. viii.
\end{flushleft}
3. Thirdly, he suggests that groups of people from various traditions should visit each other's holy places together and spend some time praying together or meditating together. He shares his own experience of having been moved by visits made to various places of worship. Describing one such visit, the Dalai Lama says:

In a similar spirit, some of my Christian brothers and sisters recently came to spend a few days in Bodh Gaya... In addition to the dialogue we held together, each morning under the Bodhi Tree, we all, Buddhists and Christians, sat and meditated. From experiences like these, I have come to the conclusion that when we overcome our doubts and suspicions and approach each other with respect, there is much that we can learn from one another. 87

4. Fourth, he insists that it is through dialogue that religious leaders can discuss various crucial matters: "...a meeting like the 'Day of Prayer for Peace' in Assisi in 1986... religious leaders came together and exchanged a few nice words." 88

According to the Dalai Lama, events depend heavily on one's motivation. Thus he contends that what holds true for politics also holds true for religion. He realizes that sometimes politics is looked down upon and criticized as being 'dirty.' However, conceived objectively, politics in itself is not wrong or dirty. It is an instrument to serve human society. With good motivation — sincerity and honesty — politics becomes an instrument in the service of society. But when motivated by selfishness, hatred, anger or jealousy, it becomes dirty. This is true he suggests, not only for politics, but also for religion. Speaking about religion with selfish motives or with hatred, is not useful, because the motivation that guides it is not good. By taking this stand, the Dalai Lama attempts to show that motivation is the most important factor for any action and that, in the ultimate analysis, things depend on one's motivation, 89 calling to mind his suggestions that have been studied in Chapter-I, which suggests that wars or conflicts first and foremost, begin in the 'mind.'

87 ibid., pp. viii-ix and  His Holiness The Dalai Lama, n.79, pp. 20-21.
88 His Holiness The Dalai Lama, n.79, p. 21.
Despite the progressive secularization brought about by worldwide modernization and despite systemic attempts to destroy spiritual values, a vast majority of people continue to believe in one religion or another. Faith in religion, evident even under non-religious political systems, clearly demonstrates the potency of religion as such. The spiritual energy and power can be purposefully used to bring about the spiritual conditions necessary for world peace. It is with due consideration for such a perception that the Dalai Lama says:

'Religious leaders and humanitarians all over the world have a special role to play in this respect.' 90

He suggests two ways of going about this. One, by promoting better inter-faith understanding so as to create a workable degree of units among all religions. He suggests that this can be done in part, by respecting each other's beliefs and by emphasizing a common concern for human well-being. Two, by bringing about a viable consensus on basic spiritual values, that touch every human heart and enhance general human happiness. He suggests that: "this means we must emphasize the common denomination of all religions – humanitarian ideals." It is his opinion that these two steps will together lead to the creation of the necessary spiritual conditions for world peace. 91

The Dalai Lama's contribution to religion consists in conceiving a humanistic religion that centers almost wholly on the human being and his/her evolution in this capacity. According to him, religion (or as he sees them – the humanitarian ideals in spirituality), should pervade all our activities and cannot, just as it ought not, to be pursued in seclusion from one's fellow-beings and in separation from life's other activities. This perception of the Dalai Lama, is in consonance with the logic, that human life cannot be divided into separate, watertight compartments – his emphasis thus is that, all the seemingly separate segments, religious moral, political economic, social, individual and collective are only different expressions of human life and ought to be seen thus.


91 ibid., p. 267.
As a humanist, the Dalai Lama’s attitude of tolerance for all religions is derived from his conviction of the fundamental unity of all religious beliefs of mankind and therefore the possibility of a universal religious peace. It is on the concept of “chos-srid-zung-brel” which means “the harmonious blend of religion and politics,” that the Dalai Lama bases his religio-political thought.\textsuperscript{92} It has been suggested that: “with the passing of years, intentionally or not, the Dalai Lama has become a seasoned politician.”\textsuperscript{93} This statement solicits attention in the light of the engaged Buddhist ethic the Dalai Lama employs, firstly, to show that religion cannot be pursued in seclusion and in separation from the activities of life and secondly, by conjoining religion with politics.

In his attempt to extricate himself and the system he represents from the past, the Dalai Lama has been searching more democratic and transparent methods of religious succession, without however, entirely abandoning the doctrine of reincarnation. In fact, the Dalai Lama has said that his reincarnation could be born in any human form: “Next Dalai Lama could be an Indian or European or African — even a woman. Body doesn’t matter.”\textsuperscript{94} He says further: “My name, my popularity are useful in other fields, like promotion of human values and of harmony among world religions. It is wise that my energy should be devoted to these things rather than remain Dalai Lama.”\textsuperscript{95} As one of the most persistent advocates of reform, the Dalai Lama has tried to change the political system he himself embodies by promulgating a charter for the Tibetans in exile. And, in his own admission, the Dalai Lama states, that the Chinese did the Tibetans a favour by forcing them to purify their religion, which according to him, in some cases, had become obsessed with form and splendour at the expense of content.\textsuperscript{96}

Another radical change is that even within the monastic tradition, the Dalai Lama gives precedence to a candidate ‘knowingly entering’ the monastic order:

\textsuperscript{92} Norbu, n.70, p. 28.
\textsuperscript{94} “Dalai Lama Desires Apolitical Role,” \textit{Tibetan Review}, vol. XXXIV, no. 9, September 1999, p. 11.
\textsuperscript{95} ibid., p. 10.
Generally it is the parents who wish to see their child join the monastery. Novice vows can be taken at the age of seven, but full bhikshu ordination can only be taken after the age of twenty. I think we should adopt the system of the Christian nuns and monks, where the candidate is allowed to mature before entering the monastic order. We should extend the 'probation' period. That way our young people could enter the order knowingly and according to their own decision. 97

He says further:

I believe that despite the rapid advances made by civilization in this century, the most immediate cause of our present dilemma is our undue emphasis on material development alone. We have become so engrossed in its pursuit that, without even knowing it, we have neglected to foster the most basic human needs of love, kindness, cooperation, and caring. If we do not know someone or find another reason for not feeling connected with a particular individual or group, we simply ignore them. But the development of human society is based entirely on people helping each other. Once we have lost the essential humanity that is our foundation, what is the point of pursuing only material development? 98

Even though the Dalai Lama institution is closely linked to religion and is fostered by it, the Dalai Lama makes a break from it by clearly asserting that any sectarian view of religion would lead to the situation where politics or religion cannot be viewed as two related domains.

Thus the Dalai Lama’s rejection of the view that politics is inherently ‘dirty’, is typically non-Gandhian. For Gandhi, politics may not be inherently sinful, but, is definitely ‘inherently impure’ and can never be an ideal in any sense, although it can be purified. 99 The Dalai may not state it outright, but, even for him, as it is for Gandhi, the aim is to ‘spiritualize’ politics. Thus, for both, religions cannot stay apart from activity. The Dalai Lama clearly discerns that he could not be leading a religious life without seeing the interrelatedness in the many activities of human life. It is perhaps for this reason, that notions of religion and politics blend together and harmonize in the Dalai Lama’s thought, which is evolved and articulated in practical terms, for the needs of the contemporary world.

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97 His Holiness the Dalai Lama and Fabien Ouaki, n.58, p. 86.
98 ibid., pp. 144-5.
Diagrammatic Representation of The Dalai Lama’s Weltanschauung

- Universal Responsibility
- Non-violence
- Compassion
- Interrelatedness
- Religion
- Human Rights
- Environment
OVERVIEW AND SUMMING UP

Taking into account, the large body of the Dalai Lama’s varied writings as also the impact he has made the world over, it would be apparent that no assessment of ‘Buddhism in the modern world,’ can be considered adequate without cognizing his recommendations concerning the many problems being faced by the world community today. A question that could arise in this context is that even where they seem compelling, does a mixture of injunctions, precepts, euphemisms, exhortations and pleas, qualify as a thought?

It may be said in response, that in addressing, what has been described as his Engaged Buddhist ethics, concerns that are linked to the contemporary times, as also, in terms of the reach it has, the Dalai Lama’s thought has varied consequences for non-violent conflict resolution, peace, human rights, religious understanding and the protection of the environment - thus qualifying it as an enterprize in applied ethics/philosophy. His position as the Dalai Lama (the religious and political head of Tibet) does not reduce his thought to being an example in expediency; his formulations, expressive of a deep concern for Tibet, also succeed in establishing a universal ethic founded on the concepts of non-violence, interdependence and compassion. Therefore in assessing his thought, his concern should not be seen as limited to, or limited by his Tibetan identity either. On the contrary the Dalai Lama’s thought discusses ways of thinking and acting and applying the Buddhist ideals of wisdom and compassion to the social, political and environmental issues being faced by the world community today. His engaged Buddhist ethic, does not approve of anything that might lead men away from activity in the outside world, to mere inward contemplation that could suggest the self-sufficiency of a monk.

His assumptions sound more like convictions, on the positive aspect of human nature and he believes in the reinforcement and encouragement of this, through education. Therefore, it can be seen that his thought on politics as well as on social and individual ethics, are expressive of choices that can be exercised by the ‘educated’ human agency. He emphasizes the role of human choice in either brutalizing itself, by seeking recourse in violence, or, by being aware of the
interdependent nature of reality and as a consequence of this awareness, allowing
the manifestation of compassion and non-violence in human life. In what can be
best described as his optimistic view of human nature, the Dalai Lama recognizes
certain innate or natural tendencies and qualities to be present in human beings. At
the same time, however, he concedes that human nature can be subject to
ignorance and wretchedness, although he mostly appears firm on his view that
human nature is basically non-violent and that it is good, and a "sense of peace"
already exists in it. In this respect, the Dalai Lama’s thought is a unique blend of
the Kantian ideal, which considers all human beings as ends and not means, and of
the Buddhist tradition, particularly in his case of the Mahayana tradition (although
‘pan Buddhism’ would be a more accurate usage), in which, to live isolated and
egoistically, is antithetical to the cosmic and human interdependence; where a
person can only realize his humanity by ‘realizing’ his oneness with his fellow
beings, and by merging the ideals of personal fulfillment and salvation, with the
ideal of collective welfare and salvation. Violence according to him, is inherent in
overlooking ‘interdependence’ - a concept in Buddhist philosophy, and which
emerges as a seminal point, within the context of writings in Engaged Buddhism

It has been acknowledged that the meaning of the term ‘Engaged Buddhism’ is far from settled. There are suggestions that “all Buddhism is engaged” and also that “every moment of life is engagement; every moment of life is Buddhist.” The issue invites continued scrutiny. What however comes clear, is that as efforts to define Engaged Buddhism continue, the indeterminate and contested aspects of the subject can function fruitfully as stimuli rather than

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impediments to the understanding of what this movement is all about. This has been argued with typically, a historian's argument (although this thesis is not an attempt at studying or doing history), which explains, even the most detached and descriptive forms of historical research and writing, as acts of dividing and shaping reality-a process that is considerably more creative than one might assume. Scholars have still to pin down the definition of the term; in the meanwhile, the movement has continued to grow. Therefore, it would do well to ask, as to what Engaged Buddhism is not?

Scholars assert for example, as to what is not Engaged Buddhism? Aum Shinrikyo, the "new-new religion" in Japan, whose members released lethal sarin gas on Tokyo subways, uses Buddhist terminology and has definite ideas about changing the world for the better. The group's founder, Asaharo Shoko, has a photograph with the Dalai Lama being greeted warmly, yet it is suggested that this does not qualify Aum Shinrikyo as a form of Engaged Buddhism. There is a general consensus even among the engaged Buddhists, that any living religion or vital social movement changes constantly. Today, the Dalai Lama is widely regarded as the quintessence of Engaged Buddhism, yet in the eventuality of the movement for Tibetan autonomy failing and if the succession of the Dalai Lamas is disrupted, they suggest that, it would not be inaccurate to say, that however serviceable designations such as "Engaged Buddhism" or "Buddhism" are only constructions, limited and ultimately insubstantial. Yet it is also true that as an 'act of dividing and shaping reality,' (a view which exhibits strains of being linked to contemporary history), it is pertinent, as also of significant value to engaged Buddhist studies, to consider the Dalai Lama's worldview on Engaged Buddhism as he sees it. It does not make much headway to suggest that due to potential ambiguity of the term 'Engaged Buddhism' the considerations of the Dalai Lama are of significance only if he succeeds in getting autonomy for Tibet - as is symbolically suggested by Kenneth Kraft, as that would undermine the significance of the thought of the Dalai Lama, permeated with his concern for human values, a far more outreaching domain and perhaps beyond the confines of

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7 Kraft, n.4, pp. 486-7.
8 ibid., pp. 486-7.
9 ibid., p.486.
Engaged Buddhism itself, if it ever aims to establish itself as a dogma. This thesis has not carried out a defence of Engaged Buddhism and hence neither a critique of it, (a task beyond the scope of this study), primarily because the issue to be dealt with, has been, with what constitutes engagement for the Dalai Lama rather than with the question of what Engaged Buddhism is all about. Yet, it would be right to say that the tenor of arguments herein, is influenced by the concerns that this movement aligns itself with and by the concerns, Engaged Buddhism sees the Dalai Lama engaged with. The methodology for this study has been largely eclectic and comparative and has made an attempt to bring out issues as emergent in the Dalai Lama’s thought, which are unique to his weltanschauung.

The range of concerns that motivate Buddhists to public service and political activism, encompass nearly every area of social experience, conflict, and suffering, war and violence, race, human rights, environmental destruction, gender relations, sexual orientation, ethnicity, health care, prisons, schools, and the workplace. Like informed and caring members in every religious culture, engaged Buddhists have seen, heard, and responded to cries of fellow human beings - and of non human living beings - who face abuse, injury, or violent death. The great unity amongst the many engaged Buddhists is that the existence of suffering in the world evokes in them a feeling of ‘universal responsibility,’ as the Dalai Lama calls it. By seeking to give redressal to the Tibetan question, the Dalai Lama’s arguments have been transformed into ethical paradigms which have an explicit universal meaning and value. A sociological explanation to this emerges in various studies which shows that it is necessary to consider the efforts of personal and social actions on others especially in the realms of speech and symbolic manipulation in the present information age, and in the policies, programmes, and products of large and small institutions. There it is said: “‘The others’ affected by these actions must be understood not only as unit selves, but as significant collectivities: families, neighbours, and workplace teams; social, ethnic, and economic group; national and international populations; and, not least, biological species and ecosystems.” 10 This sociological conception has been spelt out in the following way again:

10 Queen, n.5, p.3.
Social suffering...brings into a single space an assemblage of human problems that have their origins and consequences in the devastating injuries that social force can inflict on human experience. Social suffering results, from what political, economic, and institutional power does to people and, reciprocally, from how these forms of power themselves influence responses to social problems. Included under the category of social suffering are conditions that are usually divided among separate fields, conditions that simultaneously involve health, welfare, legal, moral, and religious issues. They destabilize established categories. For example, the trauma, pain, and disorders to which atrocity gives rise are health conditions; yet they are also political and cultural matters. Similarly, poverty is the major risk factor for ill health and death; yet this is only another way of saying that health is a social indicator and indeed a social process.11

An overview of the chapters in this thesis reveals that for the Dalai Lama the most notable and principle concern is non-violence. Therefore, this concept emerges as the fulcrum for his thought in the arguments in chapter 1- "The Dalai Lama on Non-Violence and Conflict Resolution." The chapters that follow resultanty, even though representative of the various other strands in his thought, are influenced by his concern with the non-violent ideology, and are hence representations of non-violence at various levels. “Engaged Buddhism” as a school of thought, as has been explained in the Introduction, attempts to see the activist element in Buddhism, which in some quarters is at times considered a ‘passive’ school of thought. The Dalai Lama as one of the well-known figures in this movement, is trying to search unique ways of seeking representation in a world order where peace and non-violence have, a more varied implications than can be easily imagined. In one stroke of imagination, he impresses on the human need to seek new routes to a harmonious world, be it through religion or in standing up for human dignity, environmental protection or a cleaner politics. Believing himself to be a follower of Gandhi, he articulates his thought as a symbolic enterprise in which he seeks to show the interdependence of all life and thereby attempts to show the role of compassion as the pure emotive force which resonates with his concept of universal responsibility. However, a perfect shift between the Dalai Lama and Gandhi’s perspectives emerges when seen in a comparative framework

in which Baba Saheb Ambedkar (Indian Dalit Leader in the 1930s and 1940s) emerges as the third protagonist, on the issue of *Karma*.

Where Gandhi advocated compassion and improved social services for India's 'untouchables,' there Ambedkar demanded the abolition of the caste system itself. Gandhi held caste to be a deeper issue indeed 'like a cosmic law not to be abrogated by human struggle of legislative fiat.' He believed that each person is limited or empowered by the cumulative effects of his or her own *Karma* and therefore cannot be rescued by outside forces. Therefore, suggestions have been made that Gandhi separated his political philosophy in this respect from his morality. Even though he could imagine a society transformed by legislation and the action of courts, it is suggested that he firmly rejected the idea that religious identities, beliefs, practices, and morality itself were negotiable or subject to reform. There on the other hand for Ambedkar, if the collective, institutionalized expression of greed, hatred, and delusion was India's legacy of colonialism, bureaucratic corruption, and the religious-based caste system, then all of these structures, fashioned by human hearts and minds, could be repaired, remodeled, or removed. The key was the notion of collective action- both in the genesis of human suffering, and in relief. In this respect The Dalai Lama formulation differs from Gandhi's especially when seen in the context of *Karma* and human rights. In this context it may be said that, where Gandhi considered an individual's human condition as designated by the karmic law, there the Dalai Lama goes a step beyond, by making the individual larger than *Karma*.

As a concept, *Karma* is seminal to Buddhism. In Buddhism, the various manifestations of suffering natural as well as unnatural, are taken to be the consequence of *Karma*. Yet, in the Dalai Lama's view, an individual cannot

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14 Queen, n.10, pp. 16-17.

15 There is a category of natural suffering which includes phenomena like war, poverty, crime, into which the Dalai Lama has incorporated contemporary issues like illiteracy and certain diseases also. The second category is of natural suffering like old age, sickness and
shirk the responsibility of finding himself/herself in a particular situation. Says the Dalai Lama, "To say that every misfortune is the result of karma is tantamount to saying that we are totally powerless in life." Going to the root of the word karma in Sanskrit, the Dalai Lama sees it as denoting an active force, the inference being that the outcome of future events can be influenced by our actions. To suppose the karma is some sort of independent energy which predestines the course of our whole life, he suggests, is incorrect. He asks the question, "Who creates karma?" and answers his own question in the following words: "We ourselves. What we think, say, do, desire and omit creates karma... In everything we do, there is cause and effect, cause and effect. In our daily lives the food we eat, the work we undertake, our relaxation are all a function of action: our action. This is karma. We cannot, therefore, throw up our hands whenever we find ourselves confronted by unavoidable suffering. If this were correct, there would be no cause for hope." This stance pictures the extremely difficult task that the Dalai Lama has taken up, of treading a middle way between the preservation of tradition and the necessity of progress. This is necessitated by his fusing of the metaphysics of Buddhism with social activism. His considerations of the human condition are thus based on egalitarian motives and even though anthropological studies reveal the clear class hierarchies in Tibet and even now in the diaspora communities (and as it prone to be in any community world over), the Dalai Lama himself holds all human beings as equally precious to the world. This is clearly seen in his concept of 'universal responsibility' which emerges fully in his views not only on human rights but also on environmental protection, in which he discerns the entire reality as linked in a fragile cohesiveness, whereby any dissonance in one of these links is bound to have a ripple effect, to thus affect the whole. However, it would be more accurate to say that it is in his views on human rights that his egalitarian impulse blooms completely. In an extremely discerning statement which says," The universal

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principles of equality of all human beings must take precedence" 19 and descends on those who differ: "from a broader viewpoint... we are all brothers and sisters," explicitly rejecting distinctions based on color, geographical location etc. as fabrications. In an interview with the researcher the Dalai Lama clearly stated his view on caste system (see Appendix-I for interview with his Holiness the Dalai Lama). Explicitly, he considers caste to be a dehumanizing influence. Another upshot from here is discernibly in his clear although hesitant rejoinders and responses to issues like ‘gay’ rights. Clearly the reason for the Dalai Lama’s immense popularity in the West, it may be suggested, is primarily because he does not parry in answering questions on homosexuality, sex etc. Least judgmental in his approach, even as a sacred figure, he does not recoil from what could be taken as ‘profane’ issues like the above. He discusses with ease, topics that could often be considered taboo, like introducing sex education in schools and its positive results as well as its repercussions 21 establishes a deep contact between him and his audiences. Therefore, without debunking the original issue i.e. of relating non-violence to the various strands in the fabric of his thought, he clearly places the worth of humans as paramount. It is because of this that his thought does not permit any subjugation of the human agency. With ease he establishes a link between his traditional Buddhist thought and his contemporary concerns.

Thus even though The Dalai Lama and Gandhi have been seen at variance with one another 22 given the perspectives they have, the Dalai Lama’s non-violent agenda is never dogma-stricken and neither does it refrain from facing head-on issues that need redressal, but not without impediments. Observations on meat eating amongst the Tibetan have drawn some flak as they are seen as radically at loggerheads with his non-violent agenda. Veering a middle path, the Dalai Lama

20 The Fourteenth Dalai Lama His Holiness Tenzin Gyatso, Kindness Clarity, and Insight, New York: Snow Lion Publications, 1984, p.158.
21 His Holiness The Dalai Lama with Fabien Ouaki, Imagine All the People: A Conversation With The Dalai Lama on Money, Politics and Life As it Could Be, Boston: Wisdom Publications, 1999, p.93.
has not been able to give any certain answers on meat eating and non-violence other than those in the case of Tibet, for which geographical and other reasons have been cited. Are the two at variance in their spirit and essence, or is it non-violent to eat meat? Clearly, it is butcher who is seen getting the bad treatment. In the Tibetan community, meat eating is not taboo, but killing is. Thus the butcher still remains ostracized, as he had been in the past. The ethical outcome of this discussion however, is a moot point and open to further research. Reverting again to the issue of ahmisa, vis-à-vis the notion of capital punishment - one of the most important religious texts in Buddhism is a poetic collection of aphorisms known as the Dhammapada, roughly meaning “path of Dhamma,” which speaks of killing in the following way:

Everyone fears punishment; everyone fears death, just as you do. Therefore do not kill or cause to kill; everyone loves life, as you do. Therefore do not kill or cause to kill.

A related passage says:

Him I call a Brahmin who has put aside weapons and renounced violence toward all creatures. He neither kills nor helps other to kill.23

It has been observed that The XIII Dalai Lama had avoided any direct involvement in cases of capital punishment because of his religious rule. Struggling to modernize Tibet, he also reformed Tibet’s feudal legal system. Among the changes was the abolition of the death penalty by about 1920.24 The XIV Dalai Lama has continued to evolve a more direct approach, and he refers to capital punishment as a form of violence. It is significant that he has an abolitionist stance on capital punishment, a stance which finds strong support in Buddhist thought and history. The Buddha it is said not only to have taught non-violence and peace, but he even went to the field of battle itself and intervened personally and prevented war, as in case of the dispute between the Sakyas and the Koliyas, who were prepared to fight over the question of the waters of the Rohini (a river). It is also said that his words once prevented King Ajatsattu from attacking the Kingdom of the Vajjis. His views on conflict resolution become clear in his teaching of the

24 ibid., p.19.
"Ten Duties of the King" (*dasa-rama-dhamma*) as given in the Jatakā text. In the eighth of the “Ten Duties of the King” he says: “Non-violence (*avihimsa*), which means not only that he should harm nobody, but also that he should try to promote peace by avoiding and preventing war, and everything which involves violence and destruction of life.”

Like Gandhi, the Dalai Lama finds reasons to say that violence can at times be useful. For this, he cites an example: “The anger that causes us to go to the assistance of someone who is being attacked in the street could be characterized as positive.” Commenting on the seeming paradox regarding non-violence and violence in Gandhi, the Dalai Lama says:

Positive aggressive actions arise out of sincere motivation, self-confidence and tireless effort. Sometimes that appears to be aggressive, but it is positive and there is no intention to disregard other’s rights. I think some of Gandhi’s actions were quite aggressive, but there was a strong positive motivation towards a correct goal.

So much for the similarity. The difference between the two is brought out in the following passage:

The former is not descended from a line of wise men, institutionalized and anchored in history. Indeed, Mahatma Gandhi was a man of his time and had an intellectual flexibility that allowed him to adapt to the new social and political environment of the era. The Dalai Lama, on the other hand, is a prisoner of monastic tradition; he does not have the power to change anything whatsoever and it is difficult for him to adapt to a new social and political environment without hurting the feelings of certain monks and lamas.

It is apparent that such a criticism comes forth, as somewhat generalized. Indeed the Dalai Lama and Gandhi are two different figures at two different times in history. Yet, if Gandhi is allowed his intellectual flexibility, it would not be

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wrong to say that the Dalai Lama has deliberately, not, frozen his ideas within tradition. His thought shows discernible patterns of being contemporary and very relevant for the ‘modern’ world. He himself absolves himself of any dogmatism, by openly suggesting that he sees no wrong in abandoning scriptures where they do not serve any practical purpose. Implications of this stance are seen in chapter-IV, where the Dalai Lama’s striving is for a tolerant religious attitude as also a flexible stance, vis-à-vis ‘religious’ issues, that can have a questioning attitude to the merely textual/ritualistic stance of the scriptures. Where Gandhi was not utilitarian, there clearly, the Dalai Lama’s worldview has a marked utilitarian flavour - it could be in terms of his advocacy for human rights, environmental protection, non-violence or conflict resolution or in his seeking religious harmony. In all these areas he is seen seeking the practical betterment of the human life. He says, “you should be ‘wisely’ selfish.” Where it would be accurate to say that the institution of the Dalai Lama has many roles to play in the society (primarily as the “guarantor of social order” for the Tibetans), despite the problems it raises, there, it would not be too accurate to say that the alleged Tibetan ‘clinging’ to the institution of the Dalai Lama, despite its critics, is because without the Dalai Lama office, there would be institutional void and resultantly, political and social chaos could be the result - as has been suggested by a few. This can be said because the Dalai Lama clearly states that if the Dalai Lama institution serves no purpose for the Tibetans, it should be abandoned. In his words: “The existence of the Dalai Lama institution is the choice of the Tibetans. It was made clear in the sixties by me. But this institution is useful in the present situation for Tibetans and their culture. Dalai Lama’s institution will cease to exist in future, if it is no longer useful. So I sometime say that I am the last Dalai Lama.”

It is with such a context in view that observations have been made, that the Dalai Lama’s position as the leader of an exiled community has forced him to come to terms with a world that is very different from the traditional Buddhist society in which he was born. He has become not only the most prominent advocate of the Tibet case, but has also come forth as its main ‘theoretician.’

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29 ibid., p. 30.
30 ibid., p. 30.
Although much of his focus is on the Tibet cause, he believes that he has a responsibility for all sentient beings. This comes forth in his declarations like the following: “My motivation is directed towards all sentient beings. There is no question, though, that on the second level, I am directed towards helping Tibetans.” As a corollary, he cognizes ‘ancient traditions’ to be relevant even today and he emphasizes on combining modern knowledge with ancient wisdom. Therefore, while he talks about preserving ‘traditions’ that are capable of enhancing and propagating human values, and calls upon people to preserve spiritual and social values, on the other hand, he talks about disbanding caste system and practices like sati and the dowry system, both of which he considers as detrimental to the ‘interests’ of the society. Therefore, even though he belongs to a tradition in which, due to his position as the Dalai Lama, he is important enough to serve as the “daily regenerator” of the Tibetan founding myth, yet, he does not hesitate in giving his opinion, that, China did Tibet a favour by extricating it from the past evils.

In the same spirit, his remarks on ‘caste’ or ‘sati’ bring out his focus on human values, and as a logical corollary, on human dignity, be it in his own worldview or in the dynamic paradigms of other cultures. His observations come in handy to illustrate this: “If we maintain obsolete values and beliefs, a fragmented consciousness and self-centered spirit, we will continue to hold on to outdated goals and behaviours. Such an attitude by a large number of people would block the entire transition to an independent yet peaceful and cooperative global society.” He has emphasized and reiterated this view time and again to reinforce his conceptualization of non-violence. In his vision, non-violence as a concept does not have restrictive application amongst and for human beings only. He sees is as the act inspired by the right (non-violent) motivation, and as having applicability to

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34 Huitzi, n.28, p.24.
35 See Chapter IV for further details.
the ecology, the environment and the relations that humans share with other living beings on the planet. Non-violence he suggests, can be applied similarly to day-to-day lives, whatever an individuals position or vocation, it is relevant to medical procedures, education systems, legal procedures and so forth. From such a vantage point, the Dalai Lama links the issue of human dignity as gleaned from the essence and spirit of Buddhist philosophy, and places it firmly in the context of current debates on human rights. Antithetical to the existential philosophy which attributes an in-itself to subjects i.e. human beings, the Dalai Lama's thought moves away from the existential stance when he says: "It is a major error, a 'root-error,' to isolate human life, to attributes to it an essence, an in-itself." However, such a stance taken by him, should not be mistaken for a rejection of the dignity of the individuals, either in terms of leading to a denial of human rights or for the individual growth. Positioning himself to argue for the dignity of the individual, chapter -II attempts to bring out, the deft handling done by the Dalai Lama, of the contentious issues of the Universal human rights as well as of the Asian View of human rights. The crux of the Dalai Lama's argument here is neither in favour of the Asian view of human rights and neither for 'Universal' human rights, as seen by some to be defined by the West.

Therefore it is seen that what he is actually arguing for is the 'dignity of human beings' and it is this, which should be, according to him, universally accorded to every individual; thus, where he escapes the 'Trojan Horse' paradox, there, he manages to carry out an effective delineation of the human rights thesis, giving an argument, that it is as much valid for both the contexts - the Asian as well as the Western. Such a stance can be seen as aptly summed up by Mrinal Miri, a philosopher: "Human rights are rights, which belong to human beings, qua human beings, as beings who can exercise freedom through reason. Such rights, therefore, are unique to human beings and apply universally to all human beings." A violation of these, as emphasized by the Dalai Lama, points to a lack

of recognition of the 'essential unity' of all phenomenon. It is Mrinal Miri’s suggestion, that the notion of human rights is primarily a moral notion and that “the human rights discourse can become practically relevant for us... can enter the density of our everyday practical concerns only by shedding its pristine universality and uniqueness-at least to a large extent.”\textsuperscript{40} Since the notion of human rights is directly linked to questions like ‘how does it (human rights) enter into our idea of the good life?’ – therefore he suggest that one way of understanding about the “good life” is “through one’s active intelligent engagement in moral practice.” In this context Miri suggests that it is in the Gandhian notion of \textit{Satyagraha} that knowledge and practice are inalienably interwoven. He says: “Knowledge and articulacy about \textit{Satya}, which for Gandhi, is the same as the good, is to be achieved only through active and contemplative moral engagement in actual human situations.” Therefore he says: “If it is agreed, therefore, that the idea of human rights is a moral idea, then the human rights discourse must be rescued from its abstract, disengaged universality and placed firmly in the context of localized moral discourses and the practices from which these discourses derive their sustenance.”\textsuperscript{41} In an attempt to move away from making human rights talk, a hollow rhetoric or a talk inspired by ulterior motives, he suggests that a serious and mature human rights advocate, must already know-and act in ways which show that he or she knows-what it is like to be, for, instance, a good father or a good mother, a good friend, a good husband or a good wife, a good member of a community, a good citizen, and if s/he is in academics, a good researcher. (However, these are issues that can only be explored at length, in further study).

In this context, the Dalai Lama proposes, that, it is the dichotomy of “we” and “they” that create chasms between individuals. In the ultimate analysis, there are actually no differences between individuals, since all individuals are linked, one to another.\textsuperscript{42} He turns the argument around and instead of rights, he focuses attention on the notion of responsibility. Extending the argument of responsibility, he mobilizes it into a concept and gives it the name of “universal responsibility.” Thence, by emphasizing the aspect of universal interconnectedness, through the

\textsuperscript{40} ibid., p.161.
\textsuperscript{41} ibid., pp. 161, 162.
\textsuperscript{42} See Interview with His Holiness the Dalai Lama in Appendix-I.
concept of universal responsibility, he attempts to articulate a moral vision in which rights become important, only vis-à-vis responsibility. Hence there is no attempt to debunk social responsibility in his arguments. The social is as important as the individual, as is the universal or the global. Where his thesis is discernibly utilitarian, there he sublimates it with his considerations, in bringing in, respect for others and concern for their rights. His stance stands clearly for the view that there is no single set of Western, Islamic or Asian cultural values and would thus can aptly said to be, a clear rejection of Huntington's thesis,\textsuperscript{43} as analyzed in chapter-II. At another plane, the Dalai Lama also recognizes and realizes that at times it is economy that becomes larger than human rights. In a clear discernment of this he expresses "I believe economics and human rights are interlinked... when China did not heed to world appeals on human rights... The US should have put economic pressure on China" (for details see chapter-II), a view which incidentally also reveals his understanding and knowledge of the operations of political economy in contemporary times. Grounded in compassion, the Dalai Lama's discourse on human rights is not ecliptic; the trajectory from which he has approached this issue, addresses many domains, all at the same time - the moral vs. the individual, the private vs. the social and the social vs. the universal. In his thought, lie not seeds of dissent or discord, for like the concept of non-violence he has based the assumption of human rights exactly where it belongs - in the human being himself/herself. This is a notion that is clearly described in the following words: "So although the world may become large or small ultimately it is the relation between two individuals only. As soon as the second man is visualized the concept of the world also arises. The second man, therefore, includes in him all the rest of individuals in the world."\textsuperscript{44} This view is summed up by the Dalai Lama in the following way, "we need to develop concern for the problems of others, whether they be individuals or entire people."\textsuperscript{45} In accordance with the Buddhist


\textsuperscript{45} "Speech on Human Rights and Responsibilities," The Political Philosophy of His Holiness the XIV Dalai Lama: Selected Speeches and Writings, edited by A.A. Shiromany, New
interpretation of compassion being based on a clear acceptance or recognition of others, like oneself, as wanting happiness and wanting to eschew suffering; on that basis one develops some kind of concern about the welfare of others, irrespective of one's attitude to oneself. This he calls "compassion." His arguing for the non-violent nature of human beings, extends naturally to their having non-violent relations amongst themselves and this aspect finds a logical coherence, in his seeking of a non-violent attitude towards the environment as well.

Since nothing is postulated to exist independently, therefore any harm to humans, animals or to the environment is tantamount to a violation of the phenomenon of interrelatedness (See Chapter III). Thence, it becomes visible that the Dalai Lama's thesis on environmental protection is a logical corollary to his non-violent thesis as also is an extension of his arguments on the legitimacy of human rights. In such a spirit he says: "we should not only maintain non-violent relations with our fellow human beings, but... we should extend a similar attitude towards the environment" [as well].

Traditional moral philosophy showed little concern for the relationship of humans with nature. When philosophers did examine the moral status of animals and natural objects, it was usually for the purpose of ruling them out of ethical bounds, in the manner of Descartes in his one statement - 'cogito ergo sum' - which means 'I think therefore I am' and from here it is derived that what does not think 'is not.' Of course he was referring to consciousness at a different level - but not without its interpretations for issues, in this context, particularly pertaining to nature. Even well into the middle of the twentieth century, environmental ethics was simply inconceivable as a subject for philosophy. Eugene C. Hargrove writes: "environmental ethics was something only environmentalists talked about. If you had asked a philosopher what he knew about the subject, you would most

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likely have been greeted by stunned silence... Environmental ethics was entirely alien to the normal kinds of things that philosophers talked about. However the intensity of environmental concerns in the 1970s, coupled with an unprecedented eagerness on the part of philosophers who sought to apply philosophy to contemporary issues, created a new field: environmental philosophy. However, it would be overstating the case, to imply that no philosopher was interested in the ethics of human - nature relationships prior to the age of environmentalism. But philosophical attempts to widen the moral circle were few, far-between, and relatively unnoticed, compared to the sudden burgeoning of environmental philosophy in the 1970s. An idea that strikes a similar chord with the Dalai Lama’s thought, from the philosophers in this genre (if one may take the liberty to term it so), is in their recognition of the tenet “that there is no individual welfare (or liberty) apart from the ecological matrix in which the individual life must exist.”

Further, if we focus on the arguments given by E.F. Schumacher, who in re-appraising the Western economic attitudes, brought out the book titled Small is Beautiful, makes a suggestion herein that “Buddhist Economics” is not a nostalgic dream and that ‘modernization’ as currently practiced without regard to religious and spiritual values, is not actually producing agreeable results. Buddhist Economics on the other hand is based on ‘Right Livelihood’ which is one of the requirements of the Buddha’s Nobel Eightfold Path. In Schumacher’s opinion, the Buddhist point of view takes the function of work to be at least threefold: to give man a chance to utilize and develop his faculties; to enable him to overcome his egocenteredness by joining with other people in a common task; and to bring forth the goods and services needed for a ‘becoming’ existence. One important aspect the author writes about, brings out the difference between modern economics and Buddhists economics in a striking way over the use of natural resources. This has implications for the Dalai Lama’s though on environment. Referring again to Schumacher, who suggests that the ‘modern’ man, in his opinion, does not seen to mind how much he wastes or destroys and says in this context:

50 Nash, n. 48, p. 122.
51 ibid., p. 122.
52 ibid., p. 160.
He does not seem to realize at all that human life is a dependent part of an ecosystem of many different forms of life. As the world is ruled from towns where men are cut off from any form of life other than human, the feeling of belonging to an ecosystem is not revived. This results in a harsh and improvident treatment of things upon which we ultimately depend, such as water and trees.53

Significantly, the teaching of the Buddha, enjoins a reverent and non-violent attitude not only to all sentient beings but also to the natural world, for instance the trees. Thus injunctions are found in Buddhist ethic, that instruct that: “Every follower of the Buddha ought to plant a tree every few years and look after it until it is safely established, and the Buddhist economist can demonstrate without difficulty that the universal observation of this rule would result in a high rate of genuine economic development...”54

Also, modern economics does not distinguish between renewable and non-renewable materials, as its very method is to equalize and quantify everything by means of money price. Thus, the only significant difference, that is drawn by modern economists, is of “the relative cost per equivalent unit,” as Schumacher says. From a Buddhist point of view, non-renewable goods must be used only if they are indispensable, and then too, with the greatest care and the “most meticulous concern for conservation.” It is here that the Dalai Lama’s concept of non-violence becomes more coherent when seen through Schumacher’s approach. To cite Schumacher again: “To use them [non-renewable goods] heedlessly or extravagantly is an act of violence, and while complete non-violence may not be attainable on this earth, there is nonetheless an ineluctable duty on man to aim at the ideal of non-violence in all he does... As the world’s resources of non-renewable fuels-coal, oil and natural gas-are exceedingly unevenly distributed over the globe and undoubtedly limited in quantity, it is clear that their exploitation at an ever-increasing rate is an act of violence against nature which must almost inevitably lead to violence between men.”55

This is an argument that the Dalai Lama also considers in a similar spirit. In his visualization, the “Zone of Non-Violence” viz., ‘Tibet,’ is also the zone where, apart from its implication for de-militarization and peace, environment is respected

54 ibid., p.44.
55 ibid., pp.44-55.
and taken care of. The Dalai Lama, even though he does not consider it wrong for 'humans to use nature to make useful things,' yet he take a categorical stand against exploiting nature unnecessarily and excessively. In this context, the Dalai Lama has taken it upon himself, to define the definite practical role of the media and education as tools to inform on the significance of environmental protection. He considers both, media as well as education to have a special responsibility in this arena: “If there is one area in which both education and the media have a special responsibility, it is, I believe, our natural environment. This responsibility has less to do with questions of right or wrong than with the question of survival. The natural world is our home. It is not necessarily sacred or holy. It is simply where we live. It is therefore in our interest to look after it.”

Sensitive to the current global concerns, he has also referred to issues like population, contraception and cloning. Even though, from the Buddhist point of view, life is precious, he takes a radical step, by stepping aside and examining this aspect in the current world. Thence, he suggests that the growing number of people, pose a threat to the survival of humanity and thus says that pragmatic birth-control measures need to be adopted in order to “protect the quality of life for the future generations.” While he suggests that cloning would overburden the earth, he rejects abortion as a violent act.

It can be said that the Dalai Lama’s thought on environment is an appeal to humanity, to slow down the deteriorating conditions in the environment. Mc.Leod Ganj in Dharamsala, is not exactly a haven, representative of the Dalai Lama’s worldview. However it can be discerned that his thought is a radical departure from the conventional, and it is from here, that implications can be drawn for his thought on religion.

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The Dalai Lama emphasizes the egalitarian spirit of “religion.” Therefore he abandons notions of proselytization. He also draws out the significant role of development, progress and scientific evolution in the context of religion. He emphasizes that although mankind has made enormous material progress, yet the human spirit still, yearns for the inner development which he terms as spiritual development and, which is peculiar to each and every individual from all religious faiths. However, he seems to assume a stereotype when he informs on what he conceives as the gift of technologically advanced Western world to its populace. This gift, he visualizes as the lack of faith in the spiritual quest. So even though he argues for equality amongst human beings and is considered an upholder for human rights, be it for the Tibetan people or for non-Tibetans, however, his considerations on religion somehow, seem to make an exemption, as if for two sets of people - the non Western and the Western: “...when he speaks about the West the Dalai Lama is sometimes content, for convenience’s sake, to stick with an image that has no nuances. We regularly do the same when we speak of the Arab countries, of Africa, or Japan: we keep only striking features that simplify everything. Yet Buddhism keeps teaching us that every simplification, if indeed it claims to describe a whole society, is false and hence dangerous.”

Such statements can often seems to make the Dalai Lama’s thought simplistic and cliché ridden. Discernibly, an almost constant feature in his writings, such nebulous expressions and idioms, cannot be taken as truly representative of his “thought.” Therefore, if one looks below the edifice of his writings, and an attempt is made to asses and glean out the essence of what may appear to the raw eyes as mere statements, it becomes amply clear that these are only aberrations in his thought and if, only these, should be highlighted, resultantly the Dalai Lama’s main emphasis or main message would be lost. A true understanding of the Dalai Lama would be possible, only by reaching below his seemingly veiled statements and observations.

Correspondingly, as a response to Jean Claude Carrière’s critique of the Dalai Lama’s seemingly simplistic explanation and also as a response to Carrière’s

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quote cited earlier, an example can be brought out from a statement that the Dalai Lama made while on his tour of the USA in September - October 1979. He said: "Material progress should be seen primarily as a source of physical comfort, but should not be confused with mental peace." Clearly he is not derisive of science or of what he refers to as the "Western" material culture brought about by progress in science. Therefore he says, "No religion basically believes that material progress alone is sufficient for humankind. All religions believe in forces beyond material progress. All agree that it is very important and worthwhile to make a strong effort to serve human society."61

Further, the Dalai Lama’s discussion on religion is a symbolic insight into examining the role of religion in conflict as also into conflict resolution methodologies and methods. His improvisations of actual ways in which conflicts can be resolved at various levels, be they at the political or the religious and social levels - these improvisations are a comprehensive move, away from mere rhetoric to an actual mapping out of a discourse that offers actual solutions to conflict ridden situations, or, in finding ways and means to eschew conflicts. The Dalai Lama in moving away from ‘mere’ religion, authenticates and justifies the "spiritual" underpinnings of all religions, while emphatically condemning all fanaticism.

Even though Buddhism as perceived by Ashoka, may not seem an exact example, to the Buddhism pursued by the Dalai Lama, it can be conclusively said that even where he acknowledges it to be a way to accomplish renunciation and purity, Buddhism as seem in the Dalai Lama’s worldview can not described as a mere shrinking from the world in distaste. The Dalai Lama sees it as grounded in specific, positive internal states that have manifestations in real life. The example of Ashoka given by Romila Thapar, where the historian brings out as to how, Ashoka tries to refrain from killing animals and from aggressive warfare as also,


plants trees, digs wells and establishes health care,\textsuperscript{62} is a pointer to the Buddhist ideal, of a positive programme of action, and not, of giving up action; in the contemporary times this finds an apt representation in the Dalai Lama’s vision of Engaged Buddhism. If there are traces of the ‘utopian’ particularly in the Dalai Lama’s considerations of ‘realpolitik’ which emerge from the ‘ideapolitik’ of non-violence and which have varied implications for the various strands of his thought, it would do well to remember that even if utopias remain utopias, they also represent and embody within their purity, the eternal quest of humankind for all that is authentic and perfect in the world.