CHAPTER III
The Dalai Lama's View and Human Rights

Tibetans are devout Buddhist. They adhere to the teachings of Hinayana and Mahayana including Tantrayana and pay equal respect to them.\textsuperscript{1} Though Buddhism was introduced in the earlier period of Tibetan history but spread steadily and penetrated gradually to every aspect of Tibetan life. The institution of the Dalai Lama, is considered as reincarnation of Buddhissatva, Avalokitshwara, the Lord of Love and compassion, came into existence with the emergence of Gendun Dub (1391-1474), the youngest of Tsongkhapa's foremost disciples as the I Dalai Lama.\textsuperscript{2} It was in 1642, during the time of V Dalai Lama, that, both secular and spiritual aspects have merged in the institution of the Dalai Lama.\textsuperscript{3}

The present the Dalai Lama, Tenzin Gyatso, is XIV in succession who took the reign in 1950 but he had to leave Tibet


\textsuperscript{2} Ram Rahul, \textit{The Dalai Lama: The Institution} (New Delhi, 1995), p.3.

\textsuperscript{3} Tibet the Fact, A Report prepared by the Scientific Buddhist Association for the United Nation Commission on Human Rights, Tibetan Young Buddhist Association, (Dharamsala, 1990), p.10.
in 1959 in the wake of Chinese aggression. He is now in India from where he has been running the Tibetan Exile Government.

As the head of Government he has been mobilising the people around the world to put pressure on the Chinese regime for the freedom of Tibetans. But his concern and commitment for human rights is not limited to the Tibetans, it embraces the entire humanity. He is advocating human rights in global context but the argument he gives is based on the essence of Buddhist moral philosophy. His concept of 'universal responsibility' is reflected from his numerous writings and speeches. Which is neither egocentric nor homo-centric but truly universal. His ideas are based on inter-dependence of all phenomena for all sentient beings. The Dalai Lama is the supreme spiritual leader of the Tibetan people, in that capacity he is the best interpreter of Buddhism. He had been well trained in religious practices of all aspects of Tibetan Buddhism Viz. Hinyana, Mahayana and Tantryana⁴ and encouraged to attain Buddhahood which means "The state of supreme Enlightenment,

total and unqualified, free from all moral and mental defilement, and from the defilement caused by the power of discriminative thought."\(^5\) This has made tremendous impact on his thought process and the philosophy he advocates is based on the Buddhist approach to life, its problems and goals.

They do not want pain and suffering, all they want happiness. No doubt, human being is superior in status because of his ability to think and having the power of expression which must be effectively used to bring happiness not only for himself but for all the sentient beings but what happens in reality is that human being exploits others just for his selfish gains. This brings suffering rather than happiness to all including the actor himself. So for happiness, it prescribes removal of anger and hatred which is the real problem for pain and suffering with love and compassion. Thus the whole edifice of Buddhism is based on "Do not harm others .......... extend loving kindness to all creatures".\(^6\)

\(^5\) David Howarth, op.cit., p.223.
Concept

The Dalai Lama's view of human rights is based on this central core of Buddhist teaching, i.e. to save all sentient beings from suffering through cultivating the spirit of compassion. This method has been called by Ikeda 'Buddhist humanism'.

The Dalai Lama considers that the purpose of life is happiness, peace and joy but there are various obstructions which are the handiwork of human beings. These Human made problems can be solved only through proper understanding and collective human action. So there is need for freedom because only a free human being can use his intelligence to understand the problems and through his creativity he can bring happiness to himself and mitigate the suffering of others. This scheme of human happiness needs three kinds of freedom. At the first level, it is the inner freedom of human mind which has to be achieved at personal level. He says that every human being has two qualities. They are the good qualities as well as bad ones.

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8 Asian Age, New Delhi, 1 January, 1995.
Anger, attachment, jealousy, hatred are the bad traits. They are the real enemy and inside troublemaker, which disturb the tranquility of human mind and are destructive to others. Man can't be happy unless these negative emotions are replaced by the positive qualities such as love and compassion. Though they lie within every human being because human nature is essentially loving and gentle but it is usually limited in scope and biased in nature. He defines that "love means wishing that all sentient beings should find happiness and compassion means that they should be free from suffering." The real love is not based on attachment but on altruism and compassion is not a matter for contemplation for one's narrow self interest but a human response to suffering. He says that these are the ultimate source of human contentment. Therefore he wants to train every individual in that direction. This is the Mahayanist way of achieving 'Nirvana' or Buddhahood.

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10 Times of India, 4 April, 1993.
But he emphasizes that cultivation of compassion is not a prerogative of only religious people. It can be done by any people who considers himself as human being because love is not alien to anybody. It plays important role in everyone's life from birth to death. No body can deny this powerful feeling. Therefore he suggests it must be consciously developed and applied by every individual because it is not just morally important but best effective way of pursuing one's own interest. If any individual adopts the self centred approach and use others for his vested interest, he may get temporary happiness and that will not last long. Moreover, it will prove disastrous to all others. So the wise course is to think about others also. In this way one is sure to get happiness because it is just the by-product of loving and serving and this happiness will be forever.

On the second level he puts emphasis on physical freedom as pre-requisite of his humanitarianism that is every human being has equal right to pursue his goal of happiness irrespective of whether he is rich or poor, educated or uneducated, belongs to one nation or another, adheres to this ideology or that ideology. And for that he suggests two essential conditions for
says that "brute force, no matter how strongly applied can never subdue the basic human desire for freedom."\textsuperscript{13}

However, his constant fight for the restoration of freedom and democracy does not deter him to praise for the Marxist egalitarianism, and even consider himself as half Marxist.\textsuperscript{14} He says that human being also suffer from poverty, hunger and disease as a result of unequal distribution of wealth in society which is not only morally wrong but practically cause, all sorts of social evils."\textsuperscript{15} There he emphasizes, unless there is economic equity social and political equality is very difficult to achieve.

This shows that his ideas are in consonance with the norms as espoused by United Nations. He is not in favour of any particularization of human rights rather believes that the human rights standard as laid down in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and in the International Covenants is essential for all the human beings in today's shrinking world because they all want happiness.

\textsuperscript{13} Shiromany (ed.), \textit{The Spirit of Tibet: Vision for Human Liberations}, op.cit., p.145
\textsuperscript{15} Shiromany (ed.), \textit{op.cit.}, p.258.
For him human rights are universal and neither culture-specific, nor dependent on historical background. Because "all human beings, whatever be their cultural or historical background suffer when they are intimidated, imprisoned or tortured."\textsuperscript{16} If any culture hinders the principle of universal human rights then that culture must be changed and it should be in consistent with the principle because it is based on the pristine ideal of equality of human being. In his view it is mainly the authoritarian and totalitarian regimes who are opposed to the universality and indivisibility of human right and in fact they are making race, religion, ideology, culture, history, sovereignty and many other excuses as instruments to prevent any meaningful changes in structure of power. In his view such regimes must respect and conform to the universally accepted principles in the larger and long term interests of the people.

Taking these views into consideration, the Dalai Lama develops his argument on freedom in third stage and that is

\textsuperscript{16} Times of India (New Delhi), 23 July 1993.
social freedom. Government and state has been formed for the welfare of the people. If it does not protect and promote the human rights it looses the legitimacy. He says, "it is natural and just for nations and peoples to demand respect for their rights and freedoms and to struggle to end repression, racism, economic exploitation, military occupation, various forms of colonialism and alien domination." 17

Thus in the agenda for universal well being the Dalai Lama has envisaged three tier freedom. First, every individual human being could get happiness through developing compassionate attitude towards the suffering of others. Second is the physical freedom where he puts equal emphasis on liberty and equality. He argues emphatically that liberty has no separate identity and can not be divorced from equality. From this comes his support for the universality and indivisibility of human rights norms declared by the United Nations. And perhaps the third and final stage, he considers, is social freedom through which he wants to ensure that people must take charge of their

own lives. The above discussion on freedom brings him closer to system based on democracy and human rights. He says that "no system of government is perfect, but democracy is closest to our essential human nature. It is also the only stable foundation upon which a just free global structure can be built."

Differences from Western Approach

However, his emphasis on freedom, democracy and universal human rights is not similar to western approach. There are many fundamental differences. These are:

a) Western notion of rights is based on the idea of superiority of human over non human and it as only from this superiority that anthropocentric transformation rights for the human being have emerged in their thinking. In the Dalai Lama's view it is not only humans which have rights but all sentient beings have right to pursue and live in peace and freedom.

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Human beings are the most advanced in evolutionary chains so they do not give rights alone but responsibilities also.

b) In western approach the source of rights is civil morality whose primary concern is to protect the individual from any outside interference and leaves the private life of individuals free from any moral restraint. While the Dalai Lama's compassion is based on morality and so rights come out from responsibility. Therefore, rights are to pursue ends but constrained by the moral concern of others.

c) The language of rights in western approach has been developed in terms of power. While the language used by the Dalai Lama to show his humanitarian impulse is enveloped in the love and compassion and that philosophy is fully immersed in religion.

d) In western approach secularism is the most important concept of universalistic logic. It means separation of religion from the state. But the Dalai Lama's philosophy is fully immersed in religious tradition of Mahayana Buddhism from which he has taken the concept of truth, love, compassion,
brotherhood/sisterhood, non violence and tolerance. He finds it in every religion. For him spirituality makes the human being perfect. Therefore, he rejects the anti-religious credo of the west because politics devoid of spirituality is politics devoid of morality. 20

Thus the Dalai Lama takes a different route as distinct from the western approach in his support for universal Human Rights. This is based on three fundamental notion: "all people have an equal right to live in peace and happiness; people can only be happy when able to realise their inherent affinities for freedom, equality and dignity; and protection of human rights is a precondition for the expression of natural affinities. Moreover since those deprived of their rights are often also those least able to speak for themselves, the responsibility for the protection of universal human rights rests with those who already enjoy these freedoms. 21 It is within this framework of the philosophy of humanism he visualized the issue of Tibet. He says that 'Tibetan struggle is very much linked with the Bodhidharma. My

20 Freedom in Exile, op.cit., p.222.
involvement in the Tibetan struggle is my part of spiritual practice". Therefore he has no grouse against the Chinese and wants to solve the issue with reasonable accommodation with Chinese government so that Tibetan can resume their life with peace and dignity. This is based on what he says, "mutual respect and mutual benefit."23

Views on Tibet

In the Dalai Lama's perception Tibet has been illegally occupied by the Chinese in 1949/50. Since then it is under the complete control of the government of the Peoples Republic of China. This has proved to be the most painful period in the history of the Tibetan people during which they were deprived of the most basic right including the right to life, movement, speech, worship, only to mention a few. Furthermore they have tried to subjugate its culture by bringing it under the complete control by applying brute force and leaving no scope for

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22 First city (New Delhi), September, 1988.
expression. As a result of this more than one-sixth of Tibet's population died and over 6000 monasteries have been destroyed.

Even after the liberalization Tibetans are suffering under the yoke of Chinese tyranny as there is unending cycle of repression, intimidation, torture and execution. "Moreover the national and cultural identity of Tibet has been subject to attack due to an influx of Chinese settlers. Tibetans, are becoming a minority in their own hand."24 This has brought the urgency for him to settle the question of Tibet in a peaceful manner.

On 21st September 1987 the Dalai Lama proposed Five Point Peace Plan for the commencement of the negotiation at the US congressional Human Rights Caucus, which reads as follows.25

(i) **Transformation of Tibet into a zone of Peace:**

The establishing of peace zone in Tibet would require withdrawal of Chinese troops and military installations from the

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country, which would enable India also to withdraw troops and military installations from the Himalayan regions bordering Tibet. This would be achieved under an international agreement which would satisfy China’s legitimate security needs and build trust among Tibetan, Indian, Chinese and other People’s of the region.... To improve relations between the Tibetan People and the Chinese, the first requirement is creation of Trust. After the holocaust of the last decades in which over one million Tibetans - one sixth of the population lost their lives and at least as many lingered in prison camps because of their religious belief and love of freedom, only a withdrawal of Chinese could start a genuine process of reconciliation. The vast force stationed in Tibet is a daily reminder to the Tibetans of the oppression and suffering they have all experienced. Withdrawal of troops would be an essential signal that in future a meaningful relationship based on mutual trust might be established with the Chinese Government.

(ii) Abandonment of China’s Population Transfer Policy which threatens the very existence of the Tibetans as a People. The massive transfer of Chinese civilians into Tibet in
violation of the Fourth Geneva Convention (1949) threatens the very existence of Tibetans as a distinct people. In its eastern part, Chinese are now outnumbering Tibetans today, in whole of Tibet 7.5 million Chinese have already been settled and thus outnumbering the Tibetan whose population is of six million. In central and western Tibet, as referred by the Chinese as the "Tibet Autonomous Region", Chinese sources admit the 1.9 million Tibetans already constitute a minority of the regions population. These numbers do not take the estimated 300,000 - 900,000 troops in Tibet into account - 250,000 of them in the so-called Tibet Autonomous Region.

For the Tibetans to survive as a people, it is imperative that the population transfer should be stopped immediately and Chinese settlers should return to China. Otherwise Tibetans will soon be no more than a tourist attraction and relic of the past.

(iii) Respect for the Tibetan peoples fundamental human rights and democratic freedoms. Human rights violations in
Tibet are among the most serious problem of the world. Discrimination is practiced in Tibet under a policy of 'apartheid', which the Chinese call "segregation and assimilation". Tibetans are at best, second class citizens in their own country. Deprived of all democratic rights and freedom, they exist under a colonial administration in which all real power is wielded by Chinese officials of the Communist Party and the army.

Although the Chinese government allows Tibetans to rebuild some Buddhist monasteries and to worship in them, it still forbids serious study and teaching of religion. Only a small number of people, approved by the Communist Party are permitted to join the monasteries.

While Tibetans in exile exercise their democratic rights under a constitution promulgated in 1963, thousands of them are still suffering in prisons and labour camps in Tibet for their religious or political convictions.

(iv) Restoration and protection of Tibet's natural environment and the abandonment of China's use of Tibet for the
production of nuclear weapons and dumping of nuclear waste. Tibetans have great respect for all forms of life. This inherent feeling is enhanced by the Buddhist faith, which prohibits the harming of all sentient beings, whether human or animal.

The dangers this present are obvious. Not only living generations but future generations are threatened by China's lack of concern for Tibet's unique and delicate environment.

(v) **Commencement of earnest negotiations on the future status of Tibet and of relations between the Tibetan and Chinese Peoples.**

I wish to approach this subject in the long term interest of all: the Tibetans, the Chinese and all other peoples concerned. Tibetans and Chinese are distinct peoples, each with their own country history, Culture, language and way of life. Differences among peoples must be recognised and respected. They need not, however, form obstacles to
genuine co-operation where this is to the mutual benefit of both peoples.

Despite cool response from the Chinese establishment, Dalai Lama threw another offer at Strasbourg in continuation of the fifth point mentioned in the earlier proposal for the resolution of the Tibetan question. This was for the first time that he accepted the Chinese sovereignty over Tibet in exchange for genuine and well defined autonomous rights. This proposal defined the status of Tibet in association with China in political term. These were the main points.26

The whole of Tibet known as Cholka Sum (U-Tsang, Kham and Amdo) should become a self-governing, democratic and political entity founded by law on agreement of the people for the common good and the protection of themselves and their environment, in association with the People's Republic of China.

The Government of the People's Republic of China could remain responsible for Tibet's foreign policy. The Government of

Tibet should, however, develop and maintain relations, through its own Foreign Affairs Bureau, in the field of religion, commerce, education, culture, tourism, science, sports and other nonpolitical activities. Tibet should join international organisations concerned with such activities.

The Government of Tibet should be founded on a continuation of basic law. The basic law should provide for a democratic system of government entrusted with the task of ensuring equality, social justice and protection of the environment. This means that the Government of Tibet will have the right to decide on all affairs relating to Tibet and the Tibetans.

As individual freedom is the real source and potential of any society's development, the Government of Tibet would seek to ensure this freedom by full adherence to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights including the right to speech, assembly and religion. Because religion constitute the source of Tibet's national identity, and spiritual values lie at the very
heart to Tibet's culture, it would be special duty of the
government of Tibet to safeguard and develop its practice.

The social and economic system of Tibet should be
determined in accordance with the wishes of the Tibetan people,
bearing in mind to raise the standard of living of the entire
population.

This approach to solve the issue is known as 'Middle Way
Approach" in which his emphasis is on seeking genuine
autonomy within Chinese constitutional framework. This is
freedom not independence\(^27\) which he says is necessary to
preserve the culture.\(^28\) Loosing one's independence is acceptable
but loosing one's culture, accepting the destruction of our
spiritualism of Tibetan Buddhism is unthinkable.\(^29\)

This is his main plank all these years because in his view
the root cause of the Tibet is not just the human rights violations
"these are often the result of politics of racial and cultural

\(^{27}\) Times of India, 17 August, 1996.

\(^{28}\) The Hindustan Times, 15 November, 1997.

\(^{29}\) New Strait Times Kuala Lumpur, 30 Oct, 1996.
discrimination and are only the symptoms and consequences of a deeper problem. The Chinese authorities identify the distinct culture and religion of Tibet as root cause of Tibetan resentment and dissent. Hence their policies are aimed at decimating the integral core of the Tibetan civilization and identity".30

In this situation the Dalai Lama maintains that negotiation is the best way to secure the right of the Tibetan people to live in freedom peace and dignity and this is conducive to both as it will also contribute to stability and unity of People's Republic of China.31

However, he has repeatedly emphasised that Tibet is not about the power and position of the Dalai Lama or the future of the Tibetan refugees, rather it is the question of the rights and freedoms of the six millions of Tibetans. Therefore the people of the Tibet is the ultimate deciding authority as he says:-

31 The Dalai Lama's interview with the Taiwanese newspaper Chung Kuo-Shi-Pao on 7th March 1997 in SWB/FE/3480a/7-11, 11 March, 1999.
"Whether Tibet was previously part of China or not, whether it was previously independent or not, if under present circumstances, the Tibetan people want to be separate because they are ethnically, culturally and linguistically different and are in danger of losing their identity and their culture, they have the right to exercise the right to self determination. On that basis, the entire Tibet should be equal and share in the exercise of right to self determination. So the right to self determination on that basis is the right of a people, the Tibetan people, regardless of past and present status of Tibet. Now my position is seeking self rule mainly in order to overcome, the danger of extinction of Tibetan so, therefore when I talk about self rule, I am talking of the whole Tibet, the six million Tibetan people.\textsuperscript{32}

Thus putting the things together it appears that the Dalai Lama's view of human rights is based on the universal well being. This has been influenced by his personality which combines several entities; first of all as a spiritual and temporal head of the Tibetan people his primary concern is with their

\textsuperscript{32} (ICJ interview with the Dalai Lama on 3\textsuperscript{rd} December 1996), \textit{ICJ Reports}, December 1997, pp.349-359.
freedom, secondly as a Buddhist monk he is concerned with the happiness of all sentient beings, thirdly as a compassionate human being with good heart he approaches even his enemies with love.

In his humanitarian philosophy he puts emphasis on the freedom of human agency so that every individual can take charge of maximizing happiness to all. This can be done if individual takes the responsibility of his own enlightenment and each individual must be autonomous in action. The idea of autonomy of individual brings him closer to the democratic forms of government and he has no argument with it if it works in the humanitarian way. He supports the human rights norms of United Nations in its totality because they are in consonant with his ideals of humanitarian philosophy i.e. freedom and equality. It is within this framework he advocates the freedom of Tibetans who are suffering under the Chinese rule which in his view is mainly because Tibetans are not in Charge of their own affairs. Therefore, he seeks self-rule for them within the Chinese constitution. This is a unique model of opposing oppression without any hatred against enemy.