

Speech by His Holiness the Dalai Lama

*at the Symposium on Buddhism's
contribution to Art, Letters, and Philosophy
November 29, 1956, at New Delhi*

Mr. Chairman, distinguished Prime Minister, fellow delegates, and friends.

His Holiness the Panchen Lama and I are highly honoured by opportunity to address this symposium before it concludes its deliberations this afternoon.

We are indeed grateful to the Government of India and the Working Committee for the Buddha Jayanti celebrations in India for their very kind invitation to visit India during the 2500th Anniversary of the Buddha's Parinirvana and for the excellent program of visits arranged for us.

As we are all interested in the development and spread of the Dharma, I am sure you will be interested to know something of the evolution and development of Buddhism in Tibet.

In the early seventh century, during the reign of the Tibetan King Song Tsen Gampo, Thonmi Sambhota and many other Tibetan students were deputed to India to learn the literature of the Dharma. Having learned Sanskrit grammar and literature thoroughly from Pandit Lha Rigba Sengge and other scholars of Kashmir, these students returned to Tibet. Thonmi Sambhota invented the Tibetan script based on the Nagari and Sharda scripts of northern and central India respectively. They translated many books into Tibetan.

In the eighth century, during the reign of the Tibetan King Trisong Detsan, many great Indian scholars, such as Acharya Shantirakashita, Padma Sambhava, Bimala Mitra, and Kamala Shila, were invited to Tibet. Many Tibetan students, such as Yeshes Wangbo and Vairochana, studied Sanskrit and translated numerous books on Mahayana and Vajrayana into Tibetan. Seven Tibetan men became bhikshus. The cultural and spiritual relations of India and Tibet have gone on increasing ever since.

In the ninth century, the Tibetan King Tri Ralpachen invited many scholars, such as Jina Mena, Surendra, Ratna Bodhi, and Bhodi Dhana Shila, who revived the old translations and rewrote them into a more standardised Tibetan language. During the reign of the cruel King Lang-Darma, Buddhism declined to a low ebb, surviving only in remote Tibetan villages. But many great men, including notably Lachen Gonpa Rapsal, raised it again from its very foundations. Many Tibetan scholars, such as Rinchen Zangpo, Gyaltsen Sengge, and Tsultrim Gyalwa of Nagtso, came to India. Having completed their studies at Nalanda and Vikramashila viharas, they invited many unrivalled Indian scholars, such as the great swami Dipamkarajnyana, Sakya Shri of Kashmir, and Mritijnyana to Tibet. In the course of time they translated all the teachings of the Buddha and the works of the Indian scholars into Tibetan. Thus the sun of the Dharma began to shine in the dark land of Tibet.

In those days it was not as easy to travel from Tibet to India as it is today. One had to measure the long, hazardous route from Tibet to India

via Nepal on foot, step by step. One had to face the dangers of wild animals and oppressive summer heat to such an extent that out of a hundred students only three or four could survive and return to their homes. It is because of their gallant efforts and sacrifices that we received the teachings of the Blessed One in our country, and they even spread to the adjacent countries.

It is unfortunate that after AD 1200 Buddhism began to decline in India. monasteries and viharas were destroyed and religious books were no longer disseminated; consequently the number of followers also decreased.

As a result of the incessant struggle of its people, India has achieved independence and has since made tremendous political, economic, and social progress. being equally generous towards all faith, India has shown great love and reverence for Buddhism and has even adopted the Dharma Chakra and Ashoka Pillar for its national emblem. This year, with a view to commemorating the kindness shown by the Compassionate One, India is celebrating the 2500th Anniversary of His Mahaparinirvana on a scale worthy of her great tradition. India has invited many distinguished guests from Buddhist and non-Buddhist countries to these celebrations, and I consider myself extremely fortunate in being able to attend them. We are convinced that such great deeds of India will not only strengthen our faith in the Dharma in the East, but will also go a long way in the propagation of the eternal truths in the West.

Its one of the Sutras the Lord Buddha had predicted that after 2500 years of His Parinirvana the Dharma would flourish in "the country of red-faced people." In the past, some of the Tibetan scholars had held that this prediction was meant for Tibet, but one scholar, Sakya Shri, has interpreted it otherwise. According to him, the prediction refers to Europe, where the Dharma may flourish hereafter, and some signs of this can be observed already. If the Dharma spreads all over the world, it will undoubtedly yield good fruits for our future life; but even in our present existence, hatred, exploitation of one by another, and the ways and deeds of violence will disappear, and the time will come when all will live in friendship and love in a prosperous and happy world. I am glad to have an opportunity of expressing my humble appreciation of the efforts which many peace-loving great Countries are making day and night towards the freedom of small countries and the elimination of aggression and war. I feel that Our lives would be entirely aimless if the Dharma which was brought to our land by great scholars at such immense cost were allowed to decay. For my part, I shall make every effort within my power to keep the Dharma alive, and I shall be grateful for your help and advice in the task of strengthening the Dharma in making it everlasting.

Friends, I thank you once again for the privilege of addressing this distinguished Assembly, and I shall devote my prayers for the fulfilment of the cause and success of the efforts of all also have gathered here for this Symposium on Buddhism, as well is for the prosperity and happiness of all beings throughout the entire universe.