

Statement of His Holiness the Dalai Lama **10 March 1985**

The 10th March this year marks the 26th anniversary of our National Uprising. As we remember our long and glorious history, our brave people and our rich cultural heritage at this important moment in our history, let us also remind ourselves of the responsibility that we share for the future of our people and rededicate ourselves to this common cause and pledge that each one of us will sincerely contribute to the best of our ability to achieve this goal.

During the past 26 years, although the vast majority of our people have been living in our own country, they were completely deprived of all basic freedoms and hence had to undergo untold suffering. On the other hand, while those of us in exile have been separated from our own country and scattered in alien surroundings, it has not been necessary for us to live in the state of fear and tension that our fellow countrymen have had to experience. This is not to say that our exile has not been without its own trials and tribulations. In short, we are living in one of the most difficult and trying periods in our history and this generation has had to face unprecedented suffering. But as our old Tibetan saying goes: 'if the root has not dried, the tree is not dead'; our situation is not without hope. And, since there have been positive developments to give us cause for hope, it is of utmost importance that we must not lose heart but find the strength and courage to make a firm pledge to persevere in our struggle.

A concrete achievement of our people in exile has been that we have not only managed to overcome our temporary problems of livelihood but we have also managed to preserve our national identity and our patriotism. And most important of all, our efforts to preserve our cultural heritage — particularly the teachings of Buddha — have yielded encouraging results. With these achievements — during the past quarter century — it has been possible for us to show to the world at large that, given the opportunity, Tibetans can be creative, industrious, resourceful and most of all we can manage our own affairs. It has also been an opportunity to demonstrate some of our enduring national traits of honesty, fair-mindedness and the ability to face our problems with equanimity. So wherever there are Tibetans, people from every walk of life have come to consider us a good natured and cultured people. Moreover, we have also managed to create a new awareness and understanding of our civilization as a whole and the Buddhist philosophy in particular. These are achievements that can be counted to our credit. Although there are not many Tibetans in exile, in view of the fact that we have maintained our national identity and our culture, we have been able to arouse renewed interest and concern for our people and our situation. These developments have also helped to bring about positive changes in many areas inside Tibet. By any standards these are no mean achievements and based on this experience, it is important that we should strive harder in the future with greater determination.

One of the factors that has contributed to our success during the past two and half decades is the feeling of the fundamental oneness of mankind, the human compassion manifested in the noble tradition of helping those in need — irrespective of the

differences in race, language, religion and culture. In our case alone this is evident from the interest, sympathy and assistance that we have received from the government and people of India, from various international voluntary organisations, religious groups and the large number of individuals. I would, therefore, like to take this opportunity to express once again our deep appreciation and to say that their help and kindness will always be remembered with gratitude.

I do not wish to repeat what I have said about the period before 1978-79. For there is nothing but sorrow connected with those years. Since then, however, conditions have improved slightly. Our people inside Tibet are no longer dying of starvation. Even with regard to our culture there have been some improvements in the facilities for the study of Tibetan language. Similarly, in spite of continued difficulties, it is now possible for family members and relatives from inside and outside Tibet to visit one another. We welcome these positive changes.

The basic issue of Tibet is both complicated and deeply rooted in history. So, there can be no immediate and simple solution to our problems. Nevertheless, factors like truth and human determination are important. Moreover, the situation in the world is always changing and will not remain the same.

In ancient times, the problems of one country were seemingly of no concern to the other nations and often remained unknown to them. But today, when the world is becoming smaller and more interdependent, events even in a remote region arouse the concern and attention of the rest of the world. This is because what happens in one country affects the overall global situation. Based on their own past experience China has also realised that it cannot remain isolated from the rest of the world. As a result, they have been compelled to adopt new ideas and policies. So, compared to the conditions a few years back, there has been some progress in their fundamental policies. But in order to achieve genuine happiness in any human society, freedom of thought is extremely important. This freedom of thought can only be achieved from mutual trust, mutual understanding and the absence of fear. On the other hand, if we only pay lip service to noble sentiments but continue to harbour hatred and ill will within our heart, sooner or later there is bound to be confrontation. In the case of Tibet and China too, unless we can remove the state of mutual fear and mistrust, unless we can develop a genuine sense of friendship and goodwill — the problem that we face today will continue to exist.

It is important for both of us to learn about one another. While the Chinese have forced their point of view regarding the issue of Tibet upon the Tibetans, they have continued to ignore the real facts concerning Tibet. It is now for the Chinese to act according to the enlightened ideals and principles of the modern times; to come forward with an open mind and make a serious attempt to know and understand the Tibetan people's view point and their true feelings and aspirations. This, I feel, is very important. It is wrong to react with suspicion or offence to the opinions that are contrary to one's own way of thinking. It is essential that differences of opinion be examined and discussed openly. When differing viewpoints are frankly stated and sensibly discussed on an equal footing, the decisions or agreements reached as a result will be genuine and beneficial to all

concerned. But so long as there is a contradiction between thought and action, there can never be genuine and meaningful agreements.

So, at this time, I feel the most important thing for us is to keep in close contact, to express our views frankly and to make sincere efforts to understand each other. And, through eventual improvement in human relationship, I am confident that our problems can be solved to our mutual satisfaction.

My prayers for the well-being of all sentient beings.

The Dalai Lama

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