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THE DALAI LAMA

FOREWORD

Samdhong Rinpoche is someone I hold in high regard. He belongs to the last generation of Tibetans who reached adulthood and accomplished a part of their monastic training before leaving Tibet. Then, having come into exile in India, he both completed his traditional Tibetan monastic studies and acquainted himself well with modern approaches to education. Rinpoche first taught at our Central School for Tibetans in Shila and Darjeeling as a spiritual and cultural teacher in the early sixties and later became the Principal of our school in Dalhousie. His subsequent long and effective career in education as Principal and later as the Director of the Central Institute of Higher Tibetan Studies in Sarnath was distinguished. Having reluctantly entered into political affairs, he has become an Influential Chairman of the Kashag or Council of Ministers in the Central Tibetan Administration.

Despite his genuine qualities and accomplishments, I have always found Samdhong Rinpoche to be an abstemious, reserved man. Consequently, his firm views on many issues may not be widely known outside the Tibetan community. Considering the important position he now occupies, I believe the editor of this book has done a public service in preparing this selection of Rinpoche's observations and opinions. Of course, Rinpoche and I share a similar outlook on many issues, not only because we are both Tibetan Buddhist monks, but

also because we have both been impressed by contemporary advocates of non-violence such as Mahatma Gandhi.

I think we both believe that there is an urgent need for ethics or spiritual values in the world of politics and economics. For example, we live in a world in which most human beings have to engage in some kind of economic activity to ensure their survival. They need goods and services to meet the essential requirements of existence, not to mention those things that bring dignity and comfort to human life. Yet for all the innovation and creativity of our economic activity we have not succeeded in securing these essentials for all human beings everywhere. We have to ask ourselves whether something is wrong with our choice of goals or with our motivation or with both. A social system that perpetuates and accentuates the kind of disparities we witness today can only be kept alive through violence and injustice. Violence provokes more violence. Peace, on the other hand, can only be achieved if we implement compassion.

On a personal level, if you practice tolerance and compassion, you will immediately discover that these qualities are causes of happiness. There is no machine that can produce inner peace; there is no shop that sells inner peace. No matter how rich you are, there is no way you can buy inner peace. It is something that has to come from inside, through mental practice. From a wider point of view, an interdependent community, such as the increasingly globalized world in which we live, has to be a compassionate community, compassionate in the choice of goals, compassionate in the means of cooperation or the pursuit of goals.

I feel quite sure that readers interested in these issues will find much in this book to stimulate them and I hope they may be encouraged by what they read to take practical steps according to their own circumstances to contribute to making the world in which we live a happier, more peaceful place.

January 24, 2006

"Foreword to Samdhong Rinpoche Uncompromising Truth for a Compromised World"
by His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama

Features in

SAMDHONG RINPOCHE Uncompromising Truth for a Compromised World: Tibetan Buddhism and Today's World
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