

# whyworry?

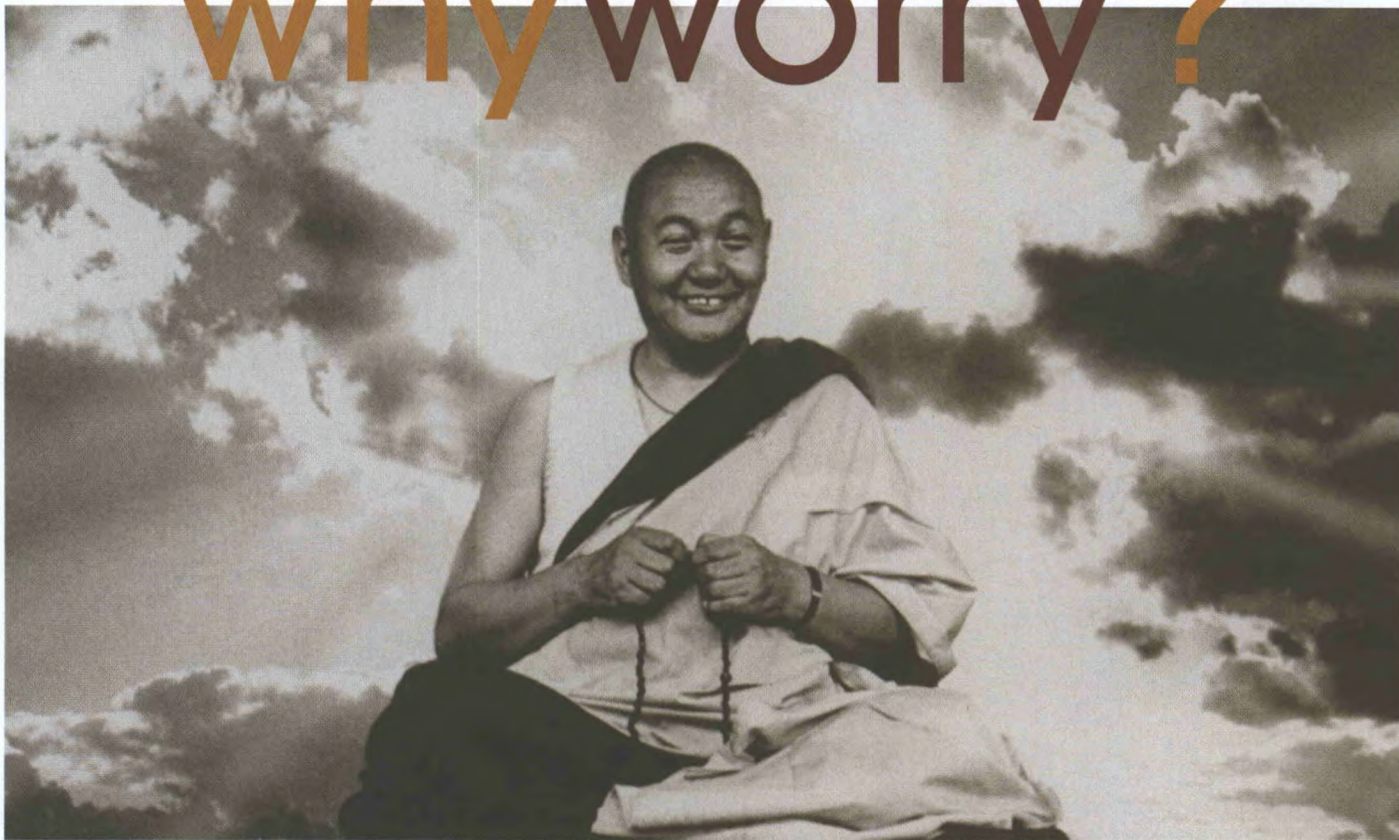


Photo: Robin Bath

LAMA YESHE's talk in Berkeley, California, in the summer of 1983 was given at a time when the world was in a state of anxiety about the threat of nuclear war. How easily it translates to today when new fears have arisen. As Lama said, "First we create a situation; then we're scared of it. ... However, there's no need for fear, worry or anxiety because, first of all, nuclear energy is a reality and secondly, our opinion of what's happening is just that – an opinion. It's not yet a reality; it's simply a presumption." This extract, edited by NICK RIBUSH of the Lama Yeshe Wisdom Archives, reflects Lama's inimitable style.

Perhaps you'll argue that even though [nuclear threat] is only a presumption, we should still worry. If that's the case, we should worry about everything. We should be anxious today about what might happen tomorrow. Every day since the world began, somewhere on earth, there has been some kind of natural disaster – flood, electrical storm, forest fire, earthquake, volcanic eruption and death and destruction in general. Nature itself is destructive by nature and has the capacity to do violence. Still, I don't think you should lose sleep over it; there's no need for fear, worry or anxiety.

By *Lama Thubten Yeshe*

I've seen many people demonstrating peacefully on TV. Even though they felt strongly about the issues, they were very easygoing. I thought that was wonderful; they understood the importance of getting their message about nuclear danger across peacefully. I was very impressed. But I'm still concerned.

My concern is that if we allow ourselves to be anxious and afraid, emotionally disturbed, we'll only produce more confusion within ourselves. When we're confused, we spread confused energy to others and the environment. Bringing peace to the world is no small task. We have to take upon ourselves universal responsibility. As individuals, our first responsibility is to guarantee that we ourselves will never harm anybody else's



life, to generate the indestructible resolve that irrespective of the circumstances, "I'm never going to touch weapons or kill other human beings." We must have that kind of determination. If you don't feel that way yourself, how can you make a big show of telling others to be like that? It's not realistic. In order to educate others about how harmful and cruel nuclear energy can be, we first have to educate ourselves.

So, we shouldn't worry about the nuclear age, because it's already here. We're human beings; we created this situation. We lit this fire a long time ago. Of course, the earth has contained nuclear energy since it began, but it has taken human intelligence to make it as dangerous as it has become. In Buddhism, we call this karma. Once a situation has manifested, the best thing to do is to accept the fact and deal with it.

Now, there's no reason for us to hate each other, but anxiety breeds hatred. Therefore, we have to check our motivation for demonstrating for disarmament and against nuclear energy. Why are we doing this? Perhaps our reasons are selfish – what we're really anxious about is our own destruction. Instead, we should have concern for the whole of humanity. That's the right motivation. Then there's no emotion. Even though you're concerned, occasionally fearful, your fear does not come from an underlying, ever-present, emotional disturbance.

What's the good of worrying about things twenty-four hours a day, disturbing your mind and preventing yourself from having a peaceful and joyful life? It's a waste of time. Nothing's going to change just because you're worrying about it. If something's already broken, it's broken. Worrying won't fix it. This earth has always been destructive by nature, nuclear age or not. There's always blood flowing someplace or another. Look at world history. It's always been like this. Buddhism calls this interdependent origination, and that's how the human mind works.

Take America's war in Vietnam, for example. That brought people together in a movement for peace. That's also interdependent. Some people saw the horrible suffering, confusion, misery and destruction wrought by others, so they went the other way, thinking, "That's not right," and despite the difficulties, created a movement of peace and love.

But the right way to eliminate harm from this earth is to first free your mind from the emotional disturbances that cause irrational fear of destruction, and then educate yourself and others in how to bring peace to the world. The first thing you must do is to control your own mind and commit yourself: "From now on, no matter what happens, I'm never going to use weapons to kill any human being." That's where world peace starts.



Human beings can control their minds and actions such that they will never kill others; people can learn to see that harming others destroys not only the others' pleasure and happiness, but their own as well. Through this kind of education, we can prevent nuclear energy from destroying the world.

We can't just campaign for the complete abolition of nuclear energy. Like electricity, nuclear energy is useful if employed the right way. If you're careless with electricity, it can kill you too, can't it? With right knowledge and method, we should campaign to ensure that everybody on earth determines, "I will never use nuclear weapons to kill human beings." If that happened, a nuclear conflagration could never occur.

Personally, I don't believe that nuclear energy is going to destroy the earth. I do believe, however, that human beings are capable of making a program to ensure that people everywhere, irrespective of whether they live in communist or capitalist societies, determine not to use nuclear weapons to kill other human beings. If we were to undertake such an effort to educate people, I think we could achieve our aim within ten years.

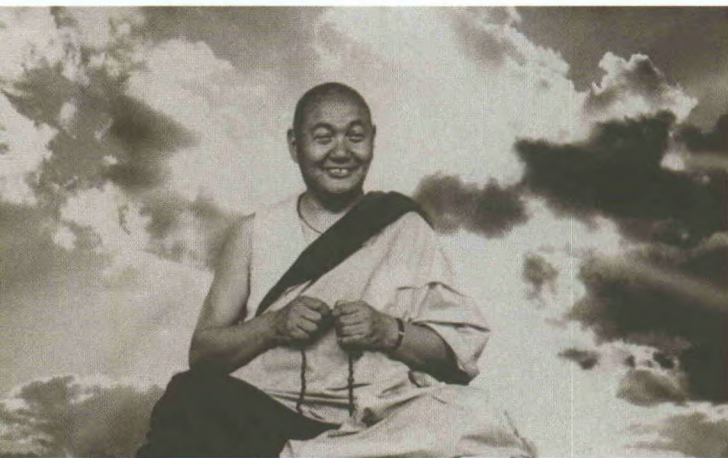
Here, I'm not talking from a Buddhist point of view; I'm not talking from any religion's point of view. I'm talking from a humanist point of view, a realistic point of view. If people's minds are out of control, they're going to use nuclear weapons.

But irrespective of whether people are religious or non-religious, communist or non-communist, believers or non-believers, I believe every human being is capable of understanding the difference between harmful and non-harmful actions and the benefit of everybody's being peaceful and happy. Since it's a universal reality, we can educate people to see it.

With respect to fear and worry, the Buddha's solution is to analyze the object of fear and worry. If you do this correctly, you'll be able to recognize that you're seeing the object as fundamentally permanent, which has nothing to do with its reality. Look at it and ask yourself, "Is this really worth worrying about? Is worry a solution or not?" Analyze the object: is it permanent or changeable? As the great saints have said, "If it's changeable, why worry? If it's not, what's the use of worrying?" When you're afraid, analyze the object of your fears.

Particularly when you're emotionally disturbed and anxious, you'll find that there's a concept of concreteness in your mind, which causes you to project a concrete object externally. Neither concept has anything to do with reality. Buddhism asserts that the mind of fear and worry always either overestimates or underestimates its object and never sees its reality. If you can perceive the fundamental, universal reality of your object of fear and worry, it will become like a cloud – it comes;





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it goes. When you are overcome with worry, you sometimes say, "It's always like this." That's not true. Things never stay the same; they always come and go – that's the reality.

Also, when you're occupied by anxiety and fear, you might mean well, but you automatically have a tendency to generate hatred. Hatred has nothing to do with peace and happiness, does it? Buddhist psychology teaches that fear and anxiety tend to produce anger, aversion and hatred. You say you want peace and happiness but your very mental state causes hatred. It's contradictory.

People who demonstrate for peace and other causes have to watch out for this, but you have to judge for yourself how far you can go without generating hatred. Everybody's different.

Let's say we're out there campaigning for peace but then the President says something with which we disagree. Should we get angry? Should we hate the President? I don't believe so; that would be a mistake. If our concern for peace and happiness makes us angry, there's something wrong. The President is a human being. He, too, wants peace and happiness. At the bottom of his heart, he wants to be happy; he doesn't want to be miserable. This is the universal reality.

Therefore, all of us in the peace movement should make sure that we don't hate any human being. This is the most important thing. When we demonstrate, we should be true to our word.

Being a politician is not easy. Even being a wife or a husband is not easy. Most situations come with responsibility and obligation. We can look outside and blindly criticize people who work as administrators and so forth, but realistically, their position can be very difficult.

To be successful, the peace movement should be selfless. If we who campaign for peace are coming from a place of selfishness, a basic concern for, "Me, me, me," we have little chance of success. If, instead, we have a broad view based on concern for all human beings – understanding that everybody wants happiness and nobody wants to be miserable – and can educate others to see this, if we work towards this goal continuously, ultimately we'll achieve it.

There are many meditations you can do to eliminate anxiety. But meditation doesn't mean going off to the mountains. You have the key to change your mind at any time, wherever

you are. You can learn to switch your mind from emotion to peace and, each time you get distracted, gently bring it back to peace again. Practice this over and over again. You can do this; it's human nature. You have to realize what you're capable of.

Check your own life, from the time you were born up to now – how many times have you changed your mind? Who changed it for you? Buddha didn't change it. Jesus didn't change it. Who changed your mind? Analyze this for yourself.

That is the beauty of being human. We have the capacity for liberation within us; we come with that ability. If we utilize our energy and intelligence correctly, we can discover that liberation and happiness are already there, within us.

The fundamental principle of Buddhism is not to kill. As Buddhists, this is our main obligation. I think most of you could promise never to kill another human being. That makes me very happy. We all have same aim; we think alike. Even though I'm a Tibetan monk, an uneducated mountain man, and you're educated people from industrialized, capitalist societies, we have the same understanding. We don't know each other, but we can still work together. That's the most beautiful thing about being human. We can communicate with others.

We should try to educate people all over the world to the point where everybody says, "For the rest of my life, I will never kill another human being." If every human being on earth could agree to that, what would there be to worry about? Who could possibly be paranoid?

In one way, the peace movement is beautiful, and if we act according to its ideas, there'll be no more racism, no more nationalism. We'll be equally concerned for all people. There'll be no more fanatical religious concerns; we won't even care if people are religious or not. Our only concern will be peace. All that will matter will be that people everywhere love and take care of each other. Who cares who's communist or non-communist? What's in the human heart is what's important, not whether people are communist or capitalist. If we talk to each other, we can change the human heart.

At present, we might be located in a non-communist country, but we shouldn't project that communists want to kill people who aren't. That's not true. People in communist coun-



tries are ladies and gentlemen, too. Like us, they want to be happy and desire not to be miserable. Therefore, together we can reach conclusions without involving the dogma of philosophy, the dogma of religion, the dogma of nationality, the dogma of racism; we can come together without any kind of dogma. That is beautiful. That is the beauty of the human being – to bring human unity and understanding without being blinded by categories.

Lord Buddha stressed the importance of generating loving kindness for all people irrespective of race, nationality, creed or anything else; he taught that all human beings and even animals were the object of loving kindness. This is the best guarantee against nuclear war, because each individual has to maintain control and take personal responsibility for the welfare of all the beings in the universe. Taking universal responsibility is the guarantee. If each individual doesn't take personal responsibility for the welfare of all, it won't work.

To bring happiness and peace to earth, we have to eliminate every situation leading to hatred and anger. That means totally eradicating our own hatred and anger. We have to make our own lives peaceful and happy. This is the way to work for peace twenty-four hours a day. If our minds harbor destructive, angry thoughts, any talk of peace is just a joke. It's merely artificial; there's no guarantee. The only guarantee is to fertilize our minds with peace and loving kindness towards all; that's the way we should do it.

The question remains, is it possible to spread these ideas throughout the whole world? Can we get everybody in the world to agree to abandon the use of nuclear arms and not to kill any human being? Can you make that determination yourself? We can spread this philosophy or not? What do you think? We're not using religion in this; we're not using Buddha, we're not using Christ, we're not using religion or non-religion – we're just concerned for the welfare of all human beings. What do you think? Do you think it's possible to make this kind of program and reach that point or not? I'm not talking nationalistically or making any philosophic argument; I'm just talking about feeling secure, taking care of each other, loving each other, bringing peace and happiness to each other. It's a very simple thing.

Therefore, in our daily lives, each of us should all dedicate ourselves to bringing peace and happiness to all beings, and this determination itself is a powerful way of bringing peace and success into our lives. But this doesn't mean not to act, either; to just be passive. But when you do act, act with wisdom and without selfishness, hatred or emotional fear. In that way, you will educate yourself and others.

Don't worry. Any talk of nuclear destruction of the earth is still speculation. It's just a mental projection; it's not yet reality. Therefore, relax and enjoy the rest of your life as much as possible. Be happy and peaceful, and don't waste your time with pessimistic thoughts, fear or worry. Thank you so much. ☸

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Four hundred years ago, a remarkable transition occurred as Mongolian warriors adopted a lifestyle of peace and loving-kindness, taught by the Buddha Shakyamuni.

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