



a simple monk

HIS HOLINESS THE DALAI LAMA

Relegating War to the Dustbins of History

Why war is becoming an outdated form of interaction

His Holiness the Dalai Lama shared this with Buddhist devotees and others, on the first day of the Great Prayer Festival, in Dharamsala, India, in March 2003, just prior to the outbreak of war in Iraq.

War, or the kind of organized fighting, is something that came with the development of human civilization. It seems to have become part and parcel of human history or human temperament. At the same time, the world is changing dramatically. We have seen that we cannot solve human problems by fighting. Problems resulting from differences in opinion must be resolved through the gradual process of dialogue.

Undoubtedly, wars produce victors and losers; but only temporarily. Victory or defeat resulting from wars cannot be long-lasting. Secondly, our world has become so interdependent that the defeat of one country must impact the rest of the world, or cause all of us to suffer losses, either directly or indirectly.

Today, the world is so small and so interdependent that the concept of war has become anachronistic, an outmoded approach. As a rule, we always talk about reform and changes. Among the old traditions, there are many aspects that are either ill-suited to our present reality or are counter-productive, due to their shortsightedness. These, we have consigned to the dustbin of history. War too should be relegated to the dustbin of history.

Unfortunately, although we are in the 21st century, we still have not been able to get rid of the habit of our older generations. I am talking about the belief or confidence that we can solve our problems with arms. It is because of this notion that the world continues to be dogged by all kinds of problems.

But what can we do? What can we do when big powers have already made up their minds? All we can do is to pray for a gradual end to the tradition of wars. Of course, the militaristic tradition may not end easily. But, let us think of this. If there were bloodshed, people in positions of power or those who are responsible will find safe places. They will escape the consequent hardship. They will find safety for themselves, one

way or the other.

But what about the poor people, the defenseless people, the children, the old and infirm? They are the ones who will have to bear the brunt of devastation. When weapons are fired, the result will be death and destruction. Weapons will not discriminate between the innocent and guilty. A missile, once fired, will show no respect to the innocent, poor, defenseless, or those worthy of compassion. Therefore, the real losers will be the poor and defenseless, ones who are completely innocent, and those who lead a hand-to-mouth existence.

On the positive side, we now have people (who) volunteer medical care, aid, and other humanitarian assistance in war-torn regions. This is a heart-winning development of the modern age.

Okay, now, let us pray... I don't know whether our prayer will be of any practical help. But this is all we can do for the moment. 🙏

This piece was translated and issued by The Department of Information and International Relations, Central Tibetan Administration, in Dharamsala, India. For information on His Holiness the Dalai Lama, including his teaching schedule, see www.tibet.com/index.html.



In the days following the Sept. 11 attack on the World Trade Center, His Holiness wrote a letter to US President George Bush, asking him to mitigate the temptation to react with violence, and reminding him that violence only perpetuates more violence.

His Holiness has also encouraged his students to campaign for the freedom of Tibet, by writing letters, creating documentaries and raising public awareness.