

Foreword to Leadership for a Fractured World

by His Holiness The Dalai Lama

Many of the world's problems and conflicts arise because we have lost sight of the basic humanity that binds us all together as a human family. We tend to forget that despite the diversity of race, religion, ideology, and so forth, people are equal in their basic wish for peace and happiness.

When we see pictures of our blue planet from space, there are no signs of boundaries. It's a vivid illustration of the oneness of humanity. This is why we have to make the well-being of humanity our primary concern. We have efficient education and remarkable technological development, yet we still face many problems. None of us want these problems, but we seem to create them for ourselves. Why? Because we are too self-centered; we place too much stress on our own narrow interests with not enough consideration for the needs of others.

Today, despite ongoing conflicts and the threat of terrorism, most people are genuinely concerned about world peace, far less interested in propounding ideology, and far more committed to coexistence.

During the twentieth century, a greater number of human beings met their deaths through violence than at any other time, and the damage done to the natural environment was very serious. But as a result of these experiences, humanity is becoming more mature. This is evident in the growing concern for peace, nonviolence, and human rights. Even politicians increasingly talk about "compassion" and "reconciliation." Despite a faltering start, the twenty-first century could become one of dialogue, one in which compassion, the seed of nonviolence, will be able to flourish.

We may sometimes feel that we can solve a problem quickly by force, but such success is often achieved at the expense of the rights and welfare of others. One problem may have been solved, but the seed of another is planted, thus opening a new chapter in a cycle of violence and counterviolence. Preventive measures and restraint have to be adopted right from the start. Clearly leaders need to be alert, far-sighted, and decisive. Mahatma Gandhi, who was such a leader, pointed out that, if we are seriously interested in peace, it must be achieved through peaceful and nonviolent means.

I believe that in ancient times the status of men and women was more or less equal, with everyone sharing an equal load of work. Then, with the establishment of settled communities, power became a factor between them. And the basis for power was physical; therefore, because they are generally physically stronger, men came to predominate. In modern times, with the introduction of education for all, the basis for power, survival, and improvement has been the brain, so the difference between men and women has changed and become less obvious. Now, when the world is so much more interdependent, compassion and warm-heartedness are required, and women have an equal responsibility to lead.

In today's reality, the only way of resolving differences is through dialogue and compromise, through human understanding and humility. We need to address the gap between rich and poor. Inequality, with some sections of humanity living in abundance while others on the same

planet go hungry, is morally wrong and practically a source of problems. Equally important is the issue of freedom. As long as there is no freedom in some parts of the world, there can be no real peace and in a sense no real freedom for the rest of the world.

Perhaps the most important factors that inhibit us are short-sightedness, narrow-mindedness, and selfishness. The challenge for leaders is to help people transcend self-interest and the immediate interests of their group in order to collaborate and promote shared happiness.

I hope and pray that readers of this book by Dean Williams will contribute to the good of the world by taking the initiative in giving a lead wherever they can to help our communities and societies solve the toughest problems. Peaceful living is about trusting those on whom we depend and caring for those who depend on us. If even a few individuals create mental peace and happiness within themselves and act responsibly and kind-heartedly toward others, they will have a positive influence in their community. Our goal should be a more peaceful and equitable world, not only for the present generation, but also for our children and the generations to come.

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