

New Millennium Message from His Holiness The Dalai Lama



Many people seem to be excited about the new millennium, but the new millennium in itself will be nothing special. As we enter into the new millennium things will be the same; there will be nothing unusual. However, if we really want the next millennium to be happier, more peaceful and more harmonious for humankind we will have to make the effort to make it so. This is in our hands, but especially in the hands of the younger generation.

We have had many experiences during this century - constructive as well as extremely destructive ones. We must learn from these experiences. We need to approach the next millennium more holistically, with more openness and farsightedness. If we are going to make the right kind of efforts to make the future of the world better, I believe the following matters are of great importance.

1. While engaging in material progress and taking care of physical well-being we need to pay equal

attention to developing peace of mind and thus taking care of the internal aspect of our being.

2. Along with education, which generally deals only with academic accomplishments, we need to develop more altruism and a sense of caring and responsibility for others in the minds of the younger generation studying in various educational institutions. This can be done without necessarily involving religion. One could therefore call this 'secularethics', as it in fact consists of basic human qualities such as kindness, compassion, sincerity and honesty.

3. This past century in some ways has been a century of war and bloodshed. It has seen a year by year increase in defense spending by most countries in the world. If we are to change this trend we must seriously consider the concept of non-violence, which is a physical expression of compassion. In order to make non-violence a reality we must first work on internal disarmament and then proceed to work on external disarmament. By internal disarmament I mean ridding ourselves of all the negative emotions that result in violence. External disarmament will also have to be done gradually, step by step. We must first work on the total abolishment of nuclear weapons and gradually work up to total demilitarisation throughout the world. In the process of doing this we also need to work towards stopping the arms trade, which is still very widely practiced because it is so lucrative. When we do all these things, we can then hope to see in the next millennium a year by year decrease in the military expenditure of the various nations and a gradual working towards demilitarisation.

Human problems will, of course, always remain, but the way to resolve them should be through dialogue and discussion. The next century should be a century of dialogue and discussion rather than one of war and bloodshed.

4. We need to address the issue of the gap between the rich and the poor, both globally and nationally. This inequality, with some sections of the human community having abundance and others on the same planet going hungry or even dying of starvation, is not only morally wrong, but practically also a source of problems. Equally important is the issue of freedom. As long as there is no freedom in many parts of the world there can be no real peace and in a sense no real freedom for the rest of the world.

5. For the sake of our future generations, we need to take care of our earth and of our environment. Environmental damage is often gradual and not easily apparent and by the time we become aware of it, it is generally too late. Since most of the major rivers flowing into many parts of south east Asia originate from the Tibetan plateau, it will not be out of place to mention here the crucial importance of taking care of the environment in that area.

6. Lastly, one of the greatest challenges today is the population explosion. Unless we are able to tackle this issue effectively we will be confronted with the problem of the natural resources being inadequate for all the human beings on this earth.

We need to seriously look into these matters that concern us all if we are to look forward to the future with some hope.

The Dalia Lama
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