



live To love

„NOW OR NEVER“ - THE FIGHT AGAINST CLIMATE CHANGE

His Holiness the Gyalwang Drukpa on Climate Change
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Hello! I just want to thank everybody and all the delegations. Usually I don't write lectures, but then a few of my friends requested me to, so that people can read what I have been talking about. So I have written a few pages, which is unusual for me, but obviously, whatever I wrote in this lecture has a meaning to me and is what I have always been concerned about and also have been talking about.

So I want to express my gratitude for giving me the opportunity to share my point of view. Especially as someone representing the Himalayas, where we see the horrible effects of climate change at first hand. Almost one-third of the world's glaciers are in the Himalayas. We are watching them melt, and we are living in very scary weather conditions. Many people have died from cloudbursts in the last few years. People have died from collapsing glaciers which suddenly flood our villages. These days, winter can come at any moment, all throughout the year. This is also very scary. Seasons are not very predictable anymore these days. We are living inside these so-called natural disasters all the time now. It is affecting food security, living conditions - everything.

Thankfully, we are all here today because all of us want to do something about it. I am very excited about it and I am especially excited to see many of you are here joining together, participating in the environmental issue - a friendly way of living with the environment. That is very important and it is very exciting for me to see all of you guys over here participating and working together.

Even though - as you can see - I am in the outfit of a religious or spiritual teacher or master. You maybe are thinking that I am a religious master, religious kind of a teacher, from my outfit, which of course is partially true. But I don't feel that religion for the time being is such an important focus for our survival.

This is what I always feel and also I am very much concerned about this. Because the religious issue has very much a focusing in society and that sometimes makes people not very comfortable. It also wastes a lot of time and we waste a lot of effort busying ourselves to fight each other, keep debating on philosophical issues, etc. But it is a crucial time for us to save the earth and restore nature instead of wasting our energy fighting amongst us, due to different believes and different principles and therefore engaging in different philosophical debates.

We must waste no time! We need to work together for ourselves and the future generations to come. Our generation will definitely suffer - not only just the next generation, but this generation is already suffering - already. So we are in a really urgent time right now. We have been stuck thousands of years in discussing and debating our theological believes as well as our differences.

Have these improved the environment we live in? I don't know. But this is a question which we have to have in our mind. We have been debating among the religions. Thousands of years we have been stuck with that sort of thing. I don't know how helpful it was for our survival, environmentally speaking. Increasingly we are submerging in rising sea levels, landslides, earthquakes, and so on. If we don't do anything right now, we will maybe be killed by natural disaster - so called natural disasters. I personally would not call it natural disasters, because it is not a natural disaster. It is a disaster which we make. We have a manmade disaster.

Although, you know the spiritual prayers, the spiritual practices, meditation and ritual practices can help to a certain extent. But action must be taken soon. We are very much in urgent times, in crucial times right now. Our planet is going to be destroyed if we don't find a solution. We could all become homeless soon. This is not some plot from a Hollywood movie, it's very real and very urgent. We have to do something - now or never.

The first step is, we must acknowledge the reality of what is happening. We don't need to live in the Arctic or the Himalayas to realize what kind of hot soup we are in. All over the news, we hear more of deadly floods, storms, and forest fires going out of control in dry climates, like in Malibu, California where 48 people died just a few weeks ago. Our coast lines are changing, too. Whole islands are being drowned in water. I heard 8 islands in the Pacific Ocean are already gone. I don't know if it is true, but it is very sad. Most people who live near to a coast feel a sense of danger these days. And all of these things are all related to rising global temperatures.

We should also recognize that other kinds of disasters are also related to climate change. For example, diseases are increasing, as the weather becomes more and more severe. New illnesses are being discovered all the time in unstable climate regions. Many animal species are disappearing. Natural shelters are disappearing. Food sources are disappearing. Actually, the plants, the animals, the water, and the air -- these are our companions. So if they are suffering, we are suffering as well. We are all interdependent on each other for our survival.

So all walks of life are suffering from this crisis, from the smallest insects to whole nations dealing with disasters.

The next thing we must acknowledge, is that despite of all these terrible things happening, so many of us humans do not seem to be concerned by climate change. This is an important point. Many people do not feel their lives are threatened - or maybe they feel threatened but they are too busy with their own survival. They have to feed their children, their family members, they have to survive day to day life so there is not much time left for them to take care of the environmental issues. So they do not take any actions, which is very much understandable. So we all have to look at it from different angles. We can't insist on them to change their concept within a short while or overnight. Maybe it is a lack of empathy. So our job must be to fight, to tell our stories, to ring all the alarm bells. We must remind people that we all share one home, the planet earth, and that we are all capable of saving it through action, or destroying it through ignorance.

We are mostly destroying the planet by deforesting, polluting the water, polluting the air, through different sorts of action which are mainly based on ignorance, because we don't know what is the effect of our wrong deeds.

I have started myself several projects to clean the environment and educate others on living ecologically. Most recognized are the Eco Pad Yatra treks. "Pad" means "foot", and "Yatra" means "journey" or "treks", so "foot treks", because we walk kilometers, miles, thousand of miles across different countries to educate the people on how important the environmental issue is. And also, we lead this kind of trek not only just once in a while, but every year. We collect several tons of plastic rubbish and all the non-biodegradable items, while trekking village to village across the country.

But the most important thing to do, no matter who you are, where you live is to examine our own habit and where we look for happiness. This is the key to healing our planet. It is our weapon in the fight against climate change. Most of the people in this generation aim for material progress and success, because this is what have been taught will bring happiness. But as we say, drinking salt water will make you thirstier. If you feed one desire, it will always lead to feeding another desire. It will become an endless pursuit until we die - if we just measure success by material things.

What do you really achieve besides leaving a lot of rubbish for the next generations? We must think about what we really need, for instance, what we want. This kind of positive education should be started as early as infancy, which means that parents must lead by example. Society must lead by example. Policy makers must lead by example. There is nothing wrong about being materially successful, but one must have a sense of taking responsibility too. I really think that we must change this expectation and habit of thinking that success only occurs with material progress.

The concept of progress must be re-engineered. We must re-engineer our mind, our attitude and our thoughts and reform our actions - starting from now. This is very important: re-engineering our concept. Obviously material success has always been very, very important and also very much welcome. But at the same time we need to develop an understanding and we need to have another set of education to rejuvenate the energy, to preserve the energy to preserve nature for the benefit of our next generations. It is a very important step I would say. The concept of progress must be re-engineered as I mentioned before. Our value system must be changed, to include the good of the greater world, rather than just focus on individual success.

To conclude, we must start the change and be the change at this very moment. Obviously, you all are participating in this meeting and also you all are very interested to listen to a speech like the one I give and also these of all the great people here. All of you can join together and make the world change immediately, right now. And we have to work towards that - but step by step, small by small. We cannot expect the world to be changed overnight, but we have to change our behavior, our attitude and our concept through re-engineering our lifestyle, so that we can contribute to this world, so we all live very happily, very successfully. So this world will become a lovely place for us to live and for the future generations to enjoy.

So this is what we all should be dreaming of and also should be working towards, in this direction. Climate change is very real, the threats are real. Humans will become extinct, if we do not begin to change our attitude towards nature and our place in this world. Thank you very much, thank you.!