

The Spiritual Leadership of His Holiness the Dalai Lama

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Abstract

This paper presents the history of His Holiness the Dalai Lama, his leadership and responsibility, and his teachings. The results of the study showed that His Holiness is the person who was born with special traits that made him “great” leader. Intelligence, self-confidence, determination, integrity, and sociability are some of the important traits that are consistently found in His Holiness. His Holiness the Dalai Lama is a man of peace. In 1989 he was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for his non-violent struggle for the liberation of Tibet. He has consistently advocated policies of non-violence, even in the face of extreme aggression. His Holiness has traveled to more than 52 countries and met with presidents, prime ministers and crowned rulers of major nations. He has held dialogues with the heads of different religions and many well-known scientists. From 1959 to 2010 His Holiness has received over 94 honorary doctorates, awards, prizes, etc., in recognition of his message of peace, non-violence, inter-religious understanding, universal responsibility and compassion. His Holiness has also authored more than 50 books. Studying His Holiness’s story gives us the other viewpoints of how he uses Ahimsa (non-violence), love, compassion, wisdom, and peace in trying for negotiation with Chinese government to solve the problems of his Tibetan people. His ongoing efforts to end the suffering of the Tibetan people through peaceful negotiations and reconciliation have required enormous courage and sacrifice.

Keywords: His Holiness; Spiritual Leadership; Liberation; Non-violence.

Introduction

People are captivated by the idea of leadership, and they seek more information on how to become effective leaders. Many individuals believe that leadership is a way to improve how they present themselves to others. Corporations want individuals who have “leadership ability” because they believe these individuals provide special assets to their organizations. Fleishman (1991) stated that in the past 50 years, there have been as many as 65 different classification systems developed to define the dimensions of leadership. Bass (1990) defined leadership as the focus of group processes. The leader is at the center of group change and activity and embodies the will of the group. Leadership can be defined from a personality perspective, which suggests that leadership is a combination of special traits or characteristics that individuals possess and that enable them to induce others to accomplish tasks. Leadership has been defined in terms of the power relationship that exists between leaders and followers. From this viewpoint, leaders have power and wield it to effect change in others. Still others

view leadership as an instrument of goal achievement in helping group members achieve their goals and meet their needs. This view includes leadership that transforms followers through vision setting, role modeling, and individualized attention (Channuwong, 2009).

Despite the multitude of ways that leadership has been conceptualized, several components can be identified as central to the phenomenon of leadership. They are (a) leadership is a process; (b) leadership involves influence; (c) leadership occurs within a group context; and (d) leadership involves goal attainment. Based on these components, we can summarize that “Leadership is a process whereby an individual influence a group of individuals to achieve a common goal.” (Peter, 2000).

Defining leadership as a process means that it is not a trait or characteristic that resides in the leader, but is a transactional event that occurs between the leader and his or her followers. Process implies that a leader affects and is affected by followers. It emphasizes that leadership is not a linear, one-way event but rather an interactive event. When leadership is defined in this manner, it becomes available to everyone. It is not restricted to only the formally designated leader in a group. Leadership involves influence; it is concerned with how the leader affects followers. Influence is the sine qua non of leadership. Without influence, leadership does not exist. Leadership occurs in groups. Groups are the context in which leadership takes place. Leadership involves influencing a group of individuals who have a common purpose. This can be a small task group, a community group, or a large group encompassing an entire organization. Leadership training programs that teach people to lead themselves are not considered a part of leadership within this definition (Donald, Mosley, Paul, Leon & Megginson, 1996).

Leadership includes attention to goals. This means that leadership has to do with directing a group of individuals toward accomplishing some task or end. Leaders direct their energies toward individuals who are trying to achieve something together. Therefore, leadership occurs and has its effects in contexts where individuals are moving toward a goal (Dominique, 2002). From all leadership definitions mentioned above, His Holiness the Dalai Lama should be one of the world leaders whose leadership can be identified as follows: (1) His Holiness the Dalai Lama is a natural born leader or somebody can say he is born to be a leader. In fact, His Holiness is not a leader who received a power from his ancestry. But it is a Tibetan belief that when the previous Lama has passed away, he will be born within 2-3 years. Before he passed away, he has told his people about the time, direction, and place that he will take a reincarnation. When the time comes, his followers follow the direction and place he has suggested. When they see the young boys who have special leadership such as physical factor, personality feature, and ability characteristic, they ask one of them about the story of the previous Lama and presented with each one of the objects that belonged to the previous Lama. The young boy who presents himself like the previous Lama or whose characteristic similar to the previous

Lama, and can select all objects that belonged to the previous Lama was believed to be the Lama in reincarnation. The boy who was believed to be the previous Lama consists of many special characteristics that make him different from the others. (2) Leadership of His Holiness the Dalai Lama is a process. It comes from the process of discovering the previous Lama in reincarnation. When this process comes to an end, he was appointed to be a king of Tibet and had the full authority to rule the whole country. His leadership influences his followers in directing them to achieve the same goals.

The History of His Holiness the Dalai Lama

His Holiness was born on 6 July 1935 in a small and rural village called “Takster”, which means “the roaring tiger,”. Takster is located in the northeast of Tibet, in Amdo province, which its border is connected with China. His parents were peasant farmers. On the whole, his parents grew enough to feed the family. Usually at that time, it was important to have many children in the peasant family, and his parents had 16 children, but nine of them died when they were very young. Of course, at the time nobody imagined that he was anything but an ordinary baby (Dominique, 2002).

After he was born, a couple of crows began frequenting the roof of his family’s house. They would arrive each morning, stay there for a while, and fly off again. This is of interest because a similar event took place after the births of the First, Seventh, and Eighth Dalai Lamas. When the 13th Dalai Lama had passed away in 1933, the task which confronted the Tibetan Government was not to simply appoint a successor but to seek for and discover a child in whom the Buddha of Compassion would incarnate. It was not necessary that the child should have been born just at the time of the death of His predecessor, or even soon after (Dominique, 2002).

As on former occasions, there would be indications of the directions in which the search should be made, and that the child would be found to possess physical and mental attributes similar to those of his predecessor.

When His Holiness was barely three years old, a team charged by the Lhasa government with the task of finding the reincarnation of the Dalai Lama arrived at the monastery in Kumbum. Various signs led these men to his parents’ farm, where they spent the night playing with him and observing him very closely. They returned a few days later with a set of objects that had belonged to the 13th Dalai Lama, and other identical objects that had not belonged to him. Presented with each one of the objects that had belonged to him, His Holiness would cry out, “This is mine! This is mine!” That is how he was eventually recognized as the new Dalai Lama (Dominique, 2002).

His Holiness's mother remembers very clearly that as soon as he arrived in Lhasa, he said that his teeth were in a box, in a particular room of the Norbulingka (the summer palace). When the box was opened, it was found to contain a set of teeth, which had belonged to the 13th Dalai Lama. Several months after the search party decided that the child they found in Takster was the true incarnation of the Dalai Lama, his parents took him to Kumbum Monastery where he was enthroned during a ceremony held at dawn. His Holiness said, "The period after that was a lonely and rather unhappy phase in my childhood. My parents left, and I was alone in a totally unfamiliar environment." It was very hard for a child to be separated from loved ones. Most of the time, he was unhappy. He did not understand what it means to be a Dalai Lama, because he felt he was little boy like any other (Dominique, 2002).

In the winter of 1940, he was taken to the Potala where he was officially enthroned as spiritual leader of the Tibetan people during a ceremony that took place in the largest reception room in the palace. He remembers especially the first time he sat on the large wooden lion throne, sculpted and encrusted with precious stones.

Soon after, he was taken to the Jokhang Temple, where he took the vows of a novice. Reting Rinpoche symbolically shaved off His Holiness's hair. He was the Regent, acting as the head of State until His Holiness came of age. Apart from Reting Rinpoche, he had two preceptors and three monks who served him: the master of ceremonies, the master cook, and the master of robes. Wherever he went he was accompanied by a large retinue of ministers and advisors from the most eminent and noble families in the country, all dressed in sumptuous silk gowns. Each time he left the Potala, almost the entire population of Lhasa, the Tibetan capital, would try to catch sight of His Holiness. And as his procession went by, everyone would prostrate in respectful silence, frequently in tears (Dominique, 2002).

The belief on His Holiness as Bodhisattva of Compassion

His Holiness is considered to be the reincarnation of each one of the previous Dalai Lamas – the first was born in 1351- and, in turn, each one is considered to be a manifestation of the bodhisattva of compassion, the holder of the white lotus. Tibetans therefore believe him to be the 14th manifestation in a lineage, which goes back to a Brahmin child who lived at the time of Shakyamuni Buddha, some 2,500 years ago.

His Holiness said, "Very few people indeed have ever been considered in any way divine. Thanks to my role, I am able to bring a lot of benefit, and for this reason I appreciate it. This role is also very useful for people in general, and I owe it to my karma to have been reborn into it. You could say that my circumstances are extremely fortunate. However, behind the idea of good fortune actually lie real causes and conditions: there is the karmic force of my capacity to take on the role, and there is my wish to do so." (Dalai Lama, 2001).

His Holiness's Studies

His Holiness's life was strictly regulated. He began His education at the age of six and finished the Geshe Lharampa Degree (Doctorate of Buddhist Philosophy) when He was 25. He studied twice a day, for one hour each time, and spent the rest of the day playing. Then, at the age of 13, he was obliged to do the same studies as any monk preparing for a doctorate in Buddhism. There were 10 subject areas, of which the five "higher" subjects are: the art of healing, Sanskrit, dialectics, arts and crafts, and the philosophy of religion. The five secondary subjects are poetry, astrology, dramatic arts, literary style, and language studies.

At 24, His Holiness took the preliminary examinations at each of the three monastic universities: Drepung, Sera and Ganden. The final examination was held in the Jokhang, Lhasa, during the annual Monlam Festival of prayer which is held in the first month of each year. In the morning He was examined on logic by 30 scholars turn by turn in congregational discussion. In the afternoon, 15 scholars took part as his opponents in the debate on the Middle Path, and in the evening 35 scholars tested his knowledge of the canon of monastic discipline and the study of metaphysics. His Holiness passed the examination with honors.

His Holiness said, "My studies were not well balanced and did not meet the training needs of anyone who was to become a national leader in the 20th century. They were based on a routine, but I got used to it. Occasionally I would have holidays, and they were happy times."

Lobsang Samten, his older brother, would come to visit him. Sometimes his mother would also come and bring him a loaf of the thick and delicious bread that is a specialty of Amdo province. She would take it herself (Dominique, 2002).

His Holiness's Leadership Responsibilities

On November 17, 1950, His Holiness was called upon to assume full political power (head of the State and Government) after some 80,000 Peoples Liberation Army soldiers invaded Tibet. In 1954, he went to Beijing to talk peace with Mao Tse-tung and other Chinese leaders, including Chou En-lai and Deng Xiaoping. In 1956, while visiting India to attend the 2500th Buddha Jayanti Anniversary, he had a series of meetings with Prime Minister Nehru and Premier Chou about deteriorating conditions in Tibet.

His efforts to bring about a peaceful solution to Sino-Tibetan conflict were thwarted by Beijing's ruthless policy in Eastern Tibet, which ignited a popular uprising and resistance. This resistance movement spread to other parts of the country. On 10 March 1959 the capital of Tibet, Lhasa, exploded with the largest demonstration in Tibetan history, calling on China to leave Tibet and reaffirming Tibet's independence. The Tibetan National Uprising was brutally crushed by the Chinese army. His Holiness escaped to India where he was given political asylum. Some 80,000 Tibetan refugees followed His Holiness into exile. Today, there are more than

120,000 Tibetan in exile. Since 1960, he has resided in Dharamsala, India, known as "Little Lhasa," the seat of the Tibetan Government-in-exile.

In the early years of exile, His Holiness appealed to the United Nations on the question of Tibet, resulting in three resolutions adopted by the General Assembly in 1959, 1961, and 1965, calling on China to respect the human rights of Tibetans and their desire for self-determination. With the newly constituted Tibetan Government-in-exile, His Holiness saw that his immediate and urgent task was to save both the Tibetan exiles and their culture alike. Tibetan refugees were rehabilitated in agricultural settlements. Economic development was promoted and the creation of a Tibetan educational system was established to raise refugee children with full knowledge of their language, history, religion and culture. The Tibetan Institute of Performing Arts was established in 1959, while the Central Institute of Higher Tibetan Studies became a university for Tibetans in India. Over 200 monasteries have been re-established to preserve the vast corpus of Tibetan Buddhist teachings, the essence of the Tibetan way of life.

In 1963, His Holiness promulgated a democratic constitution based on Buddhist principles and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights as a model for a future free Tibet. Today, members of the Tibetan parliament are elected directly by the people. The members of the Tibetan Cabinet are elected by the parliament, making the Cabinet answerable to the Parliament. His Holiness has continuously emphasized the need to further democratize the Tibetan administration and has publicly declared that once Tibet regains her independence he will not hold political office.

In Washington, D.C., at the Congressional Human Rights Caucus in 1987, he proposed a Five-Point Peace Plan as a first step toward resolving the future status of Tibet. This plan calls for the designation of Tibet as a zone of peace, an end to the massive transfer of ethnic Chinese into Tibet, restoration of fundamental human rights and democratic freedoms, and the abandonment of China's use of Tibet for nuclear weapons production and the dumping of nuclear waste, as well as urging "earnest negotiations" on the future of Tibet.

In Strasbourg, France, on 15 June 1988, he elaborated the Five-Point Peace Plan and proposed the creation of a self-governing democratic Tibet, "in association with the People's Republic of China."

On 2 September 1991, the Tibetan Government-in-exile declared the Strasbourg Proposal invalid because of the closed and negative attitude of the present Chinese leadership towards the ideas expressed in the proposal. On 9 October 1991, during an address at Yale University in the United States, His Holiness said that he wanted to visit Tibet to personally assess the political situation. He said, "I am extremely anxious that, in this explosive situation, violence may break out. I want to do what I can to prevent this. My visit would be a new opportunity to promote understanding and create a basis for a negotiated solution."

Contact with West and East

Since 1967, His Holiness initiated a series of journeys which have taken him to some 46 nations. In autumn of 1991, he visited the Baltic States at the invitation of Lithuanian President Vytautas Landsbergis of Lithuania and became the first foreign leader to address the Lithuanian Parliament. His Holiness met with the late Pope Paul VI at the Vatican in 1973. At a press conference in Rome in 1980, he outlined his hopes for the meeting with John Paul II: "We live in a period of great crisis, a period of troubling world developments. It is not possible to find peace in the soul without security and harmony between people. For this reason, I look forward with faith and hope to my meeting with the Holy Father; to an exchange of ideas and feelings, and to his suggestions, so as to open the door to a progressive pacification between people." His Holiness met Pope John Paul II at the Vatican in 1980, 1982, 1986, 1988 and 1990. In 1981, His Holiness talked with Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr. Robert Runcie, and with other leaders of the Anglican Church in London. He also met with leaders of the Roman Catholic and Jewish communities and spoke at an interfaith service held in his honor by the World Congress of Faiths: "I always believe that it is much better to have a variety of religions, a variety of philosophies, rather than one single religion or philosophy. This is necessary because of the different mental dispositions of each human being. Each religion has certain unique ideas or techniques, and learning about them can only enrich one's own faith."

Recognition and Award

Since his first visit to the west in the early 1973, a number of western universities and institutions have conferred Peace Awards and honorary Doctorate Degrees in recognition of His Holiness's distinguished writings in Buddhist philosophy and for his leadership in the solution of international conflicts, human rights issues and global environmental problems. In presenting the Raoul Wallenberg Congressional Human Rights Award in 1989, U.S. Congressman Tom Lantos said, "His Holiness the Dalai Lama's courageous struggle has distinguished him as a leading proponent of human rights and world peace. His ongoing efforts to end the suffering of the Tibetan people through peaceful negotiations and reconciliation have required enormous courage and sacrifice." (Dalai Lama, 2001).

His Holiness Routine

His Holiness always says, "I am just a simple Buddhist monk – no more – no less." His Holiness follows the life of Buddhist monk. Living in a small cottage in Dharamsala, he rises at 4 A.M. to meditate, pursues an ongoing schedule of administrative meetings, private audiences and religious teachings and ceremonies. He concludes each day with further prayer before

retiring. In explaining his greatest sources of inspiration, he often cites a favorite verse, found in the writing of the renowned eight century Buddhist Saint Santideva:

As long as space endures,

As long as sentient beings remain, Until then, may I too remain And dispel the miseries of the world (Dalai Lama, 2001).

Conclusion

His Holiness teachings also focused on the peace of mind. He stated that every day I experience the benefits of having peace of mind. It is very good for the body. As you might imagine, I am quite a busy man with many responsibilities, deciding on policies, traveling, and making speeches. All of this certainly a considerable burden, and yet my blood pressure is that of a baby. A good diet, refraining from excessive desires, and daily meditation all lead to peace of mind and this peace of mind is physically beneficial. Despite all the difficulties we encounter in life, and I have not been spared on that account, we can all experience the effects of such a way of life (Mitchell, 2002).

His Holiness the Dalai Lama is a man of peace. In 1989 he was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for his non-violent struggle for the liberation of Tibet. He has consistently advocated policies of non-violence, even in the face of extreme aggression. He also became the first Nobel Laureate to be recognized for his concern for global environmental problems. His Holiness has traveled to more than 52 countries and met with presidents, prime ministers and crowned rulers of major nations. He has held dialogues with the heads of different religions and many well-known scientists.

From 1959 to 1999 His Holiness has received over 84 honorary doctorates, awards, prizes, etc., in recognition of his message of peace, non-violence, inter-religious understanding, universal responsibility and compassion. His Holiness has also authored more than 50 books. His Holiness describes himself as a "simple Buddhist monk". In his lectures and tours around the world, his simplicity and compassionate nature visibly touches everyone who meets him. His messages are of love, compassion and forgiveness.

From reading all the stories about His Holiness the Dalai Lama, we come to the conclusion that His Holiness is the person who was born with special traits that made him "great" leader. Intelligence, self-confidence, determination, integrity, and sociability are some of the important traits that are consistently identified in His Holiness. These traits, more than many of the others, are characteristic of the people we call leaders.

Intelligence or intellectual ability is positively related to His Holiness's leadership. Having strong verbal ability, perceptual ability, and reasoning appears to make him a better leader. Self-confidence is another trait that helps His Holiness to be a famous leader. Self-confidence

is the ability to be certain about one's competencies and skills. It includes a sense of self-esteem and self-assurance and the belief that one can make a difference (Feuerstien, 2006).

His Holiness also exhibits determination. Determination refers to the desire to get the job done and includes characteristics such as initiative, persistence, dominance, and drive. Individuals with determination are willing to assert themselves, they are proactive, and they have the capacity to persevere in the face of obstacles. Integrity is another of the important leadership traits of His Holiness. Integrity is the quality of honesty and trustworthiness. Individuals who adhere to a strong set of principles and take responsibility for their actions are exhibiting integrity (Dhammanandha, 2000).

A final trait that is important for His Holiness is sociability. Sociability refers to a leader's inclination to seek out pleasant social relationships. His Holiness is friendly, outgoing, courteous, tactful, and diplomatic. He is sensitive to others' needs and show concern for their well-being (Channuwong, 2014).

The numbers of western universities and institutions have conferred Peace Awards and honorary Doctorate Degrees in recognition of His Holiness's distinguished writings in Buddhist philosophy and for his leadership in the solution of international conflicts, human rights issues and global environmental problems. These should be the evident of his special traits of leadership. His Holiness the Dalai Lama is one of the spiritual leaders who always teach about love, compassion and peace. Our confusing world will experience the real happiness and peace if the people practice in the following teachings of His Holiness "Benefit others. If you cannot benefit others, at least don't harm them."

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