



THE DALAI LAMA

In the present century, although we have reached an extraordinary level of technological development, many people remain unhappy. One of the most immediate causes of this has been our undue emphasis on material development alone. So engrossed have we become in its pursuit, that, almost without knowing it, we have neglected to foster the most basic human needs for love, kindness, cooperation, and caring. This is also reflected in a thoughtless attitude toward our natural environment.

Regardless of time and place, human beings cherish a common desire for happiness and a wish to avert suffering. From the very core of our being we yearn for contentment. In my own limited experience, the source of all happiness is love and compassion, a sense of kindness and warmheartedness toward others. Our world is rich in traditions possessing methods for developing these qualities. Lately, people seeking such methods have turned to communities that, living in harmony with nature, retain a strong commitment to cultivating the inner environment.

The Tibetans and the Navajo Indians of North America are such people. Following the teachings of the Buddha, we Tibetans have derived a clarity of mind, openness of heart, and strength of character that have given us a pragmatic resourcefulness on the one hand and the ideal of enlightenment on the other. In this book, Peter Gold describes and compares many aspects of Navajo and Tibetan Buddhist practice, highlighting the humanitarian principles on which they are based. The similarity of ideas, symbols, and practices between two cultures geographically so far apart is indeed very interesting. But what I feel this comparison most importantly reflects is the fundamental goodness of the human heart.