

# *Tenzin Gyatso – 14<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama*

## **Early Life**

The Dalai Lama was born Lhamo Thondup on July 6, 1935 in Taktser, China. After several months of searching for a **successor** to the 13th Dalai Lama and following many



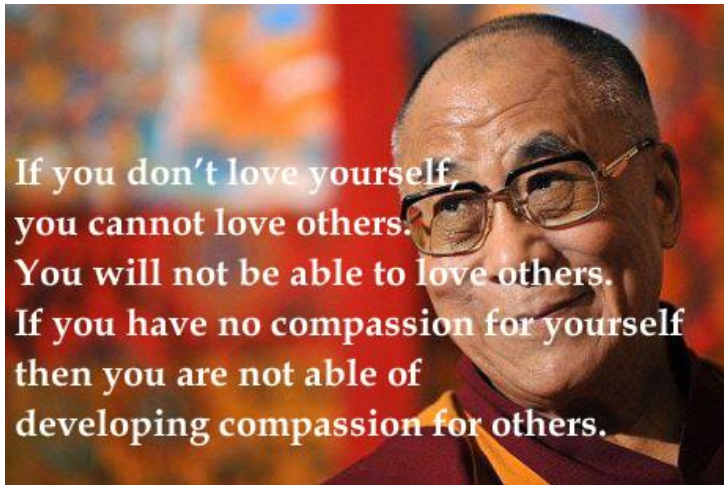
significant spiritual signs, religious officials located Lhamo Thondup, at age 2, and identified him as the reincarnation of the 13th Dalai Lama. Young Lhamo was renamed Tenzin Gyatso and proclaimed the 14th Dalai Lama.

Dalai Lamas are believed to be the reincarnation of Avalokitesvara, an important Buddhist **deity** of compassion. Dalai Lamas are also enlightened beings who have **postponed** their own afterlife and chosen to take rebirth to benefit humanity.

## **Becoming the Dalai Lama**

Tenzin began his religious education at age 6. His schooling consisted of logic, Tibetan art and culture, Sanskrit, medicine and Buddhist philosophy. In 1950, at the age of 15, Tenzin assumed full political power as the Dalai Lama. However, his leadership was short. In October of that year, the People's Republic of China **invaded** Tibet. In 1954, the Dalai Lama went to Beijing for peace

talks with Chinese leaders. However, in 1959, continued defeat of the Tibetan people by Chinese troops led to their uprising. The Dalai Lama and his closest advisers believed the Chinese government was planning to **assassinate** him. Consequently, he and several thousand followers fled to India and established an alternative government there.



At the time, the People's Republic of China considered the Dalai Lama to be a symbol of an outdated religious movement, not in line with communist philosophy. More recently,

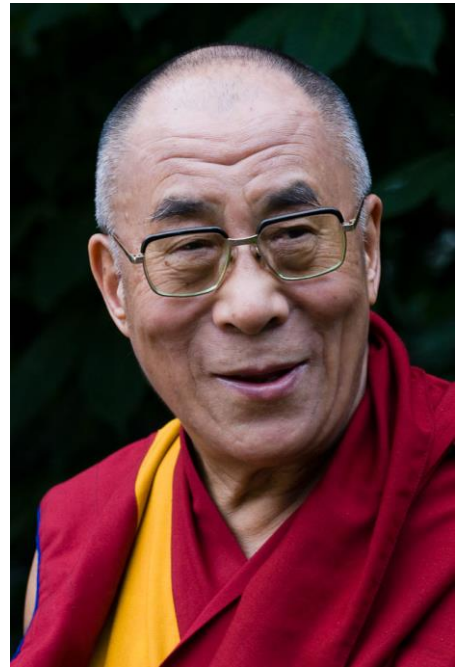
the Chinese government alleges that he is a separatist and a traitor for advocating Tibetan self-rule, and a terrorist for inciting Tibetan rebellion.

### **Conflict with China**

Since the Chinese invasion, the Dalai Lama has taken numerous actions in hopes of establishing an independent Tibetan state within the People's Republic of China. In 1963, he issued a draft **constitution** for Tibet containing a number of reforms to democratize the government.

In September 1987, the Dalai Lama proposed the Five Point Peace Plan for Tibet as the first steps in a peaceful solution to **reconcile** with the Chinese government and end the volatile situation there.

The plan proposed that Tibet would become a **sanctuary** where enlightened people can exist in peace and the environment can be preserved. In June 15, 1988, the Dalai Lama addressed members of the European Parliament in Strasbourg, France. There he proposed talks between the Chinese and Tibetans that would lead to a self-governing democratic political entity for Tibet. The entity would be associated with the People's Republic of China, and the Chinese



government would be responsible for Tibet's foreign policy and defense. In 1991, the Tibetan government-in-exile declared the Strasbourg Proposal invalid because of the current Chinese leadership's negative attitude toward the proposal.

### **Humanitarian Work**

The Dalai Lama is the spiritual leader of Tibetan Buddhism, and in the tradition of **Bodhisattva** he has spent his life committed to benefiting humanity. He has written numerous books and conducted hundreds of conferences, lectures and workshops at major universities and institutions throughout the world, discussing engaging in wisdom, compassion and, more recently, environmental sustainability. In 1989, the Dalai Lama was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for his nonviolent efforts for the liberation of Tibet and his concern for global environmental problems.

Unlike his predecessors, the Dalai Lama has met with many Western leaders and has visited the United States, Europe, Russia, Latin America and many countries in Asia on a number of occasions. Known as an effective public speaker, the Dalai Lama is often described as charismatic. His message is always one of peace and compassion for people all over the world. During his travels abroad, he has stressed the need for a better understanding of and respect among different faiths of the world. He has made numerous appearances at interfaith services and has met with several heads of other religions.

In recent years, a number of Western universities and institutions have deliberated peace awards and honorary doctorate degrees upon the Dalai Lama in recognition of his distinguished writings in Buddhist philosophy, as well as his outstanding leadership in the service of freedom and peace.

