

Chinese settlements in Tibet 'demographic aggression': Dalai Lama

The Dalai Lama is still hopeful of resolving the Tibetan issue with China but he fears that a 'demographic aggression' by the Han Chinese will make autonomy for his homeland meaningless.

The Tibetan spiritual leader also described as 'very serious' reports that the Chinese had built very good quality roads on their side of the border that India and China dispute.

'I feel that in the interest of the Chinese government, a solution has to be found in the current negotiation between Beijing and my government (in exile),' the Dalai Lama told IANS in an interview here. 'But the demographic aggression is the most serious issue. I think sooner or later a solution can be found (with the Chinese). On our part, we can wait... five years, 10 years, 20 years... But the demographic issue as well as the environment problems cannot wait.'

'Once we are able to reach a political solution, it may be too late. If only Han Chinese inhabit Tibet, what is the meaning of autonomy?'

'Like in Inner Mongolia today, it is too late. There is more than 80 percent of Chinese. It is too late.'

The Dalai Lama visited [Ahmedabad](#) on the occasion of a Tibetan festival for non-violence jointly organised by eminent dancer Mallika Sarabhai's Darpana, the Kanoria Centre for Arts and the Alliance Francaise.

Separately, addressing the faculty and students of the Indian Institute of Management, the Dalai Lama surprised them by saying that he considered himself a Marxist monk.

And at a function at the Gujarat Vidyapith, speaking to a large audience, he said that India and Tibet have a 'guru-shishya' (teacher-student) relationship. For 1,200 years, an Indian, the Buddha, has been Tibet's guru, he pointed out.

Asked by IANS about reports that India might curtail the activities of Tibetan refugees, the Dalai Lama said he had no such information.

'Anyway, the Indian government is not only sympathetic towards us Tibetans but, because of the border issue, India needs to keep a clear picture of its past relations with Tibet. I do not think that they will change their position vis-a-vis Tibet. The same policy will remain.'

India is home to some 100,000 Tibetans, many of whom fled their homeland along with the Dalai Lama in 1959. The Dalai Lama, head of six million Tibetans, has a government-in-exile that is based in the Indian hill town of Dharamsala.

The Dalai Lama was questioned about the roads and airfields China is building just north of the McMahon Line (in southeast Tibet).

'This is serious, very serious,' he said. 'Someone reliable told me that the decision to start a railway line between mainland China and Lhasa was made right after the Sino-Indian war of 1962.'

'The reason is that during the conflict, the Chinese military nearly collapsed because of the length of

the logistic lines. That is why they had to unilaterally declare a ceasefire and withdraw; they faced too many problems.

'Because of this, Mao gave instructions to start building a railway link (from China) to Lhasa. But, then, China went through the Cultural Revolution, then there was shortage of funds and later the (economic) development started (under Deng Xiaoping).

'Only a few years back, the work could start (it was completed in July 2006). It is very clear that the concept of the railway is born out of military 'business'.'

The Dalai Lama described as 'a good thing' China's decision to help restore the Buddhist Nalanda University in Bihar in India.

'The Chinese Buddhist tradition is similar to the Nalanda tradition. I also heard that in Xian, the ancient Chinese capital in Shanxi province, the Chinese Buddhist Society is rebuilding a similar Buddhist institution. I welcome this.

'I feel that in the long run, the remedy to the internal problems of China is Buddhist compassion, at least to some extent. Therefore, the restoration of Nalanda University with the help of the Chinese government is a good thing.'

Asked about the visit of 3.8 million Chinese to Lhasa, the Dalai Lama called it 'a complicated issue'.

According to him, many of them remained in Tibet to exploit the natural resources, causing a demographic aggression.

'The positive side is that many Chinese can now easily visit Tibet, and the most sensitive among them can get a good picture of what is happening in Tibet. They can meet Tibetans and encounter the rich Tibetan civilization and our cultural heritage... That is the positive side.'

Can the next Dalai Lama be a woman?

'In Tibet, the tradition of having reincarnated teachers is almost 700 years old. Among them, there is the institution of a female reincarnation. But till today, all past reincarnations of the Dalai Lama have been male.

'In future, in case a female Dalai Lama is more useful to the Buddha Dharma or to the Tibetan nation, then why not to have a woman as reincarnation?

'Sometimes, I jokingly say that if a Tibetan lady Dalai Lama comes, she will be very, very attractive. It will be more useful, because every male will become follower!'

(Claude Arpi can be contacted at claudio@auroville.org.in)

Claude Arpi (© IANS / India eNews)