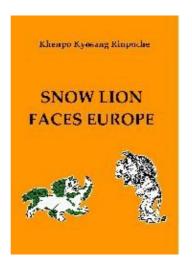
By: Khenpo Kyosang Rinpoche

This profound book is a collection of religious sermons. Yet its author, Khenpo Kyosang Rinpoche, never was a priest. He, director of the Je Tsongkapa College, is an outstanding Tibetan Buddhist lama. Rinpocheâ s observations of Western society, far from idea of "political correctness", may shock anyone. However shocking they are, their truth will strike the reader.





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SNOW LION FACES EUROPE

By

Khenpo Kyosang Rinpoche





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Snow Lion Faces Europe

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The cover shows a detail from Sharing the cake, an illustration by Sir John Tenniel from Through the Looking-Glass by Lewis Carroll.

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Editorâ s Preface

This profound and striking book is by its genre a collection of religious sermons. However, its author, Khenpo Kyosang Rinpoche, who has been living in Europe for many years, never was a priest. He, director of the Je Tsongkapa College, is an outstanding Buddhist lama.

Rinpoche never wrote these sermons. He spoke them on different occasions, both in German and in English. He never allowed recording his voice. Yet this rule was broken for several times. Each time he permitted me to keep the record for a week. I was sorry to lose them altogether so I read them from the recorder and typed the sermons before deleting the records. This is how this book was created.

To read this book one must be open-minded. Rinpocheâ s observations about Western society may shock anyone. However shocking they may seem, their truth will strike the reader. Meditating on them one cannot help seeing how true they are.

It is not only criticism, though, that makes the book worth reading. Rinpoche gives astonishing answers to the questions many of us are asking ourselves.

The first title of the book was â Teaching beyond Traditionâ . Rinpoche disliked this title. He said that no one of his sermons went beyond the tradition of Buddhism. I was meditating on the title when I suddenly came across the picture of the Lion and the Unicorn created by Sir John Tenniel as an illustration to the famous fairy-tale of Lewis Carroll. I showed this picture to Rinpoche, and he laughed heartily. â This lion exactly represents Europe,â he said. This is how the present title (and the frontispiece picture) appeared.

The reader will excuse slight irregularities of the text when considering that English is neither authorâ s nor editorâ s native language.

May all sentient being be happy!

Ludwig Roemer

Consumers

Sometimes we have to talk about â worldlyâ matters, too. There are in fact no â religiousâ and â worldlyâ matters. The law of karma proceeds anywhere, no matter if one is religious or not. Why believe that only monks and priests obey this law? Everyone who distinguishes religious truths from â worldlyâ matters is mistaken. Doing this one believes that religion is not a â real thingâ , that it is of no use for the world we live in. Only the modern Western society considers religion to be an â abstract thingâ . While the Middle Ages you Westerners used to have a different opinion. The medieval Christianity had been making enormous efforts to erect the Kingdom of Heaven on Earth. Its efforts failed. Yet they had been made. Crowds of Western people, the poor and the rich, left anything they had and went to Jerusalem, to â liberate the holy town of Jesus from pagansâ , without aiming at anything more practical. Remembering your crusades, how can you keep saying that religion is not capable of altering the world? The changes religion is capable of always go through human mind. Things are exactly what we consider them to be. If we

believe in religion being a force that changes the world, it becomes powerful. If we believe in religion being an abstract thing, it does become an abstract thing necessary only for scholars.

Right now most of you Western people consider religion to be an abstraction created by scholars. That is why you distinguish between religion and â the worldâ . You are surprised each time a religious professional begins to speak about â the worldâ , about something he had never dealt with. In fact a person is either clever or not. One either knows the world or does not. The world is one. No separate religious world exists. A religious practitioner has to know the world, human emotions, men and women better than anyone else does. One cannot be a world-knower despite oneâ s knowledge of religion. On the contrary, a religious person learns and understands the world by the very means of religion. If not, oneâ s religion is useless.

I believe many of you regard Christianity as a useless teaching. That is why you study Buddhism. I think you are mistaken. The religion you call useless has been existing two millennia. I ever wanted to study Christianity thoroughly, to distinguish Crhistian lies from Christian truths. I believe there is much truth in it. Yet people who call themselves followers of Jesus fiercely defend their lies. Why, your society is built on those lies. I know little about Christianity. I am not competent to speak about this religion. To speak about it, I had to be a Christian. Neither am I going to speak about Buddhism. Not about the Teaching. I am rather going to speak about mistakes one clearly sees with the help of Buddhism.

About consumption.

We begin with the Teaching, however. You all know that the Noble Path consists of eight items. Correct knowledge, correct thoughts, correct words, correct deeds, correct way to earn money, correct efforts, correct attention, and correct concentration. Why do I remember you at this? To show you that you cannot go any distance of this Path without your own efforts.

You cannot just press a button and start a machine of correct speech. Neither can you learn by heart â the correct wordsâ you need. Correct words do not exist independently. Imagine that you tell your disciple that he or she is lying. It is quite correct to say this if you want to improve the mind of your disciple. Yet if you say the same words to your ill mother they wonâ to ecrrect even in case they are true. Correct words never exist by themselves, without concerning particular things and particular persons. To speak correctly, you are to reflect. It means that you are to make efforts of your own mind.

It is also true when regarding correct deeds, correct attention, correct concentration, or correct way to earn money. Why do you believe that only one correct way of living exists? Even monkshood is not this only way. Imagine that only one male lives on Earth. If this only man becomes a monk, the humanity ceases to be. Moreover, even killing other people is not always a corrupt way of earning money. Each soldier is a professional killer, to say the truth. Yet sometimes people have to fight with others and to kill them. Even Buddha in one of His former lives killed a murderer who was going to kill five hundred persons. In each case

we must meditate, in each case we must rest on our conscience of Good and Evil first. If we do not have any, no God and no Teaching can ever help us.

The Path to Liberation is a conscious labor. There is conscious labor. There also is an opposite thing. Consumption.

It was money that once gave birth to the idea of consumption. What is consumption? A state of mind, which is marked by a passive waiting for pleasure, or pleasant sensations. A consumer always believes that he or she has a right for these sensations. Why, he paid for them his own money he had earned by his hard work.

The idea first appeared among vaishyas, or merchants. Other varnas, other social strata have other leading forces. They are led, for instant, by the idea of service to the people, as priests, by honor, as warriors, or simply by love. As long as the idea of consumption stays within the third varna, it does not do much harm.

The trouble begins when this idea becomes attractive for other strata, when it enslaves science, art, and religion.

Let us begin with science.

When comparing your schools with the monastic school I studied at I come to conclusion that your Western education now grows so â sugaryâ as it has never been before.

Some centuries ago, even Western students had to learn texts by heart. Now they have their computers and the Internet. The Internet is a great invention. Do you still have any knowledge in your head, though, when storing them in the world web?

Some decades ago, boys and girls studied separately. Now they are in one classroom.

Some years ago, you had no educational supplies but books. No other methods but lectures and debates. Now there are films, games, and what else you can fancy.

To sum up, you do everything for studentsâ pleasure, everything to lessen studentsâ efforts. This educational tendency is â democraticâ. You should realize, though, that school, as a source of pleasure, will never be capable of concurring with alcohol, drugs, and sex. Your school students realize it very well.

The very idea of general education is false. Why, you never force to take vows someone who does not want to become a monk. A person, forced to be a monk, is of no use for any monastery. However, you produce in big numbers your scholars, persons who are out of touch both with real and with religious life. In doing this you make a plenty of people unhappy.

The image of school students who just enjoy their studies, simply have pleasures and make no efforts would never enter your head without the idea of consumption. You believe that knowledge can be consumed, both by children and by grown-up persons.

Adults who keep studying and cognizing the world are called scholars or scientists. Your science, too, is marked by consumption.

You believe that you may use your science to get as much pleasure as you can endure. Scientists invent clever machines for washing of your linen, printing of your book, or going to any place of the world with an unbelievable rapidity. Your personal efforts are not necessary now.

You see, the matter is not as easy as you think. Despite of your going to another country by an airplane you stay in your own world, because you despise foreign cultures. Washing machines and printed books are surely a good thing. Modern machines can print a book so that you do not need to rewrite it or to cut print patterns from wood anymore. However, if cutting of print patterns has taken you a whole year you will remember the book you had made. You will appreciate it. The xylographic books are too precious. That is why nobody will print a worthless book by means of wooden patterns. I cannot imagine a xylographic â Playboyâ . Much less a xylographic â Cosmopolitanâ . The huge amount of work is incomparable with the small value of a tabloid. Today you can find in the world web any book you want to get. Even audio books exist, so that you donâ t need to turn the pages over. Getting a book and reading it requires almost no efforts now. That is why books become less and less valuable. Once you asked me why I donâ t want to write a book. I have just mentioned the ground. Understanding of an oral teaching requires much more personal efforts. Anyone has to make efforts if one wants to get real knowledge. Education without any efforts is worthless. Something you easily learn you easily forget.

Now let us deal with art. Books are different. There also are fiction books, written by great authors. There is music, written by great composers. Some fiction books and music masterpieces belong to the World cultural treasure.

How do you Westerners perceive your great works of art? You regard them as things, which produce pleasant sensations without any efforts of yours. To say it in other words, you consume your art. In case one simply consumes works of literature and music, one surely prefers Michael Jackson to Beethoven. I do not mean that production of Michael Jackson and Beethoven is equally pleasant. The music of Beethoven is capable of arousing an intensive feeling of happiness in your mind. Yet you need much less efforts to perceive the music of Michael Jackson. You can simply relax and get pleasure from it. You do believe that you have any right to get your pleasure. Why, you paid your own money for the CD of Michael Jackson. The CD of Beethoven has its price, too. So you wonder why you should make personal efforts, why you should â workâ in your free time. It was hard, though, to get money for the CD! Now, instead of getting your pleasure, you have to work again. Is it clear now why you dislike your classic composers?

I have just mentioned one of the main lies your society is built upon. You believe that every labor brings suffering, that leisure always makes one happy. At the same time, you consider laboriousness to be the main human virtue. That is why you suffer from your religion. Just consider: if leisure always makes one happy, prisoners ought to be the happiest persons on Earth. It was school that inspired into you the false idea of labor as suffering. At your schools, you performed difficult and worthless tasks. At your schools, your heads were stuffed with dead words. Why be surprised that now you detest any labor? The fact is that you want to consume your books, your films, and your music.

These persons among you who seriously believe that Michael Jackson is to compare with Beethoven. These persons regard your modern music as an alternative to your old one. It makes me think about idiots. Americans call their idiots â persons with alternative talentsâ. Be honest. If an idiot has an alternative talent a normal person does not have then your idiots are to teach children. Why, to cultivate their alternative talents. I wonâ t be much surprised if something like that proceeds at your schools in some decades.

One can consume art. One also can evaluate oneself; one can work on one a sown mind by means of art. Here you make a fatal mistake again. You have persuaded yourselves that every labor is hard and brings suffering. So you believe that every serious work of art is hard to perceive, that its perception brings suffering. You can easily notice that idea when you watch European films. Most of them are fiction films of low quality, films to consume. Yet there are a small number of films one is hardly able to watch to the end, so loathsome they are. You call these films a genuine works of arta. You could make no graver blunder.

The true art is always beautiful.

One German poet once said, â Beauty is the beginning of horror we still can endure. We admire beauty, because it refused to destroy us.â Beauty is similar with an invocation of a powerful yidam. Presence of a powerful yidam fills your mind with simultaneous feelings of horror and delight. This horror is comprehensible, for too strong a feeling is able to destroy our mind. However, beauty never fills you with disgust and boredom you feel while watching modern films for the intellectuals, the films that you falsely consider true works of art.

The true beauty is complicated. Compare a stone and a flower. Both are beautiful. However, the flower is much more complicated than the stone. Understanding of flowerâ s beauty requires more efforts from you. A sonata of Beethoven is even more complicated than a flower. You cannot perceive the real beauty without your personal efforts, without cultivating your mind. A consumer never makes efforts, though. The true beauty dies in case you regard works of art as objects of your consumption. I think it is dying right now. Consider that in the second half of the twentieth century no great European composer was born. I may be mistaken, of course. There might be great composers even now. However, their music is doomed to die without being performed and appreciated.

You surely tell me that it is not so grave. You tell that you still have your concert halls, where your old music is performed. To tell you the truth, your philharmonic concert halls seem to be arrangements of consumption as well as your shop do. You surely donâ t deny that visitors of a stadium do not cultivate their virtues, do you? In a stadium, one just gets strong impressions watching sportsmen who perform almost impossible tasks. Observing oneâ s hard labor is pleasant. It requires no personal efforts. You see, a musician, too, performs a very difficult task. You will not forgive him a single false note. Why, you have paid a huge sum of money for your ticket. That is why I consider the most of so-called music-lovers to be consumers. These so-called lovers never listen to your old music in their everyday life. You see, it is not music itself which attracts them. It is skills and hard work of the performer. In a concert hall, a woman also has an opportunity to show everybody her new dress. A man also has an opportunity to show everybody his new woman.

The idea of consumption goes beyond education and art. You do believe that religion is a thing to consume either.

Let us begin with Christianity, with the religion most of you pretend to share. You go to church, hear melodious songs, listen to organ music, and get sweet sensations without many efforts of yours.

Then a sermon follows. I have been reading some sermons of the most known Christian priests with much interest. Methinks that some decades ago, the sermons used to be more critical. More burning. Now they are somehow abstract. A priest tells you about things that ought to be there. Something about the ideal Good. About sincere love for oneâ s neighbor. About love for Jesus. And so on. Gradually you are persuaded that sincere love for oneâ s neighbor is very easy. Else, you would be taught how to cultivate it. Eventually, you are convinced that you are capable of loving everyone, just because you are Christians, just because your faith distinguishes you from pagans. No one will swim without learning how to swim. Yet no one teaches how to make children. Making children never required much qualification. So you believe, at last, that love for everyone and even for Jesus is as easy as making children. This thought is pleasant. Moreover, the pleasure this thought arouses comes to birth without any efforts of yours. You see, getting something without any efforts means consumption. That is why you consume a sermon.

Sometimes the idea that your life is wrong enters your head, though. You are conscience-stricken. You go to church and confess your sins to a priest. The priest absolves them. A completely false idea. How can a priest destroy your obstacles without your own personal efforts? Such a thing would contradict the law of Karma. However, you believe your priest. â Absolution of sinsâ sounds so touching. This is the way you consume a confession.

I know that long ago Christian priests used to give so-called penances to their parishioners. Penances similar to those we use in Sangha for monks who transgressed vows. Priests used to let the sinners read Christian purification mantras of some sort. This was very well of them. To be sure, purification practices do not suffice. You need other purification forces as well. The force of taking Refuge, for instance. The promise never to do evil deeds any more. You may think this Buddhist sight at Christianity to be naïve. Yet I believe that spiritual laws are the same for all religions. How can you get rid of your obstacles if you do not promise to restrain from Evil? As for the Refuge, I do not mean Refuge in Buddha. Christians surely are to take their Refuge in Jesus. Taking refuge in Jesus and his Dharma means that you trust in Jesus and in the Gospels more than in scientists, in your relatives, in your psychoanalysts, and so on. Now tell me: are there many Christians who do that?

Many of you get disappointed in Christianity, though. It seems to you, that this religion cannot explain your everyday life. That it doesnâ thelp you to live. To be honest, Jesus never promised to help you to live. He promised to bring you to the Kingdom of Heaven, which I think to be a Christian name for the Final Liberation. Any physician is able to cure his patient only in case the patient takes his medicines and follows doctorâ sadvices. I am not going to remember you at the advices of the Gospel. You should know them better. In any case, you never follow them. So you grow disappointed in your physician, although you never take the medicines he has prescribed. You look for another one. The half of Asia worships Buddha, so you think, â That is what I need.â

Buddhism is in fashion, besides. European priests are numerous, European lamas are few in number. I must tell you that Christianity in China is in fashion, too. Today, you can find some Christians even in Lhasa. I even saw a Gospel, translated into Tibetan. It was quite the same ten centuries ago, when foreign gurus were in fashion, when nobody listened to Tibetan lamas. People never change.

You take refuge in Buddha without giving up your habit to consume, to feel pleasure without any efforts. I tell you, what it ends up by.

You find a Buddhist lama and get a teaching from him. Not exactly the Teaching. Just a piece of it. Without listening to the end, you begin your practice. You are very impatient. You want to have results and pleasant sensations as soon as possible. In some time, having read several books, having listened to several lamas, you find a particular practice that seems to be more effective, a practice, which seems to alter your mind sooner than other practices do. You donâ t realize yet, that an effective practice seldom is the best one. Wine always changes our mind, for instant, yet it doesnâ t mean that wine is the best liquid we can drink. It is true for medicines as well. The best medicines are probably those you never feel. You donâ t understand it yet.

You seldom ask a lama for a personal advice. You say it is because lamasâ time is limited. It is true to some extent. Nonetheless, there are resident lamas. However, you dislike asking them for personal advices. Do you really believe that a lama will bite you or spit on you? I think you just feel ashamed. Why, since your childhood your priests have been persuading you that you are similar to Jesus. That it takes you just several steps to enter the Kingdom of Heaven. Asking for a personal advice will have the consequence of hearing unpleasant things about yourself who is said to enter the Heavenly Kingdom in short time. Yet some of you do ask us for personal advices. Then you go home and begin to perform the practice a lama suggested to you. You keep doing it and see no results. Allow me to ask you, why you want to see them so soon? No results can appear without much effort. You do not consider it. Instead of being patient, you say to yourself, â The old foggy was mistaken. He works unimaginatively. He doesnâ t consider what a unique person I am.â It is exactly what you say, I know. So you go back to a practice you formerly had found without assistance.

This practice yields some results. A feeling of warm in your backbone, for example, or a feeling of happiness, or some visions. So what do you do? You begin to consume your practice. You have already learnt how to do it properly, so it does not require much effort from you. Moreover, it brings pleasant sensations. This is exactly for what you do it.

Some of you stop here. Others experience an unexpected thing. They get troubles. The longer their practice, the graver their troubles.

You never guess that it is what should be. Having troubles is a good sign. Why, you have just begun your treatment, you have just begun to expel poisons from your mind. You should have troubles. You simply need to tolerate them. Even enduring them for thirty years is too insignificant an effort for the glorious fruit of the Final Liberation. Nonetheless, you donâ t want to endure physical or mental pains for thirty years. Neither are you capable of enduring them for a single year. You give up your practice altogether. After that, some of you start searching for another practice. Others search for a new religion or get disappointed in any religion.

After all, most of people are not religious practitioners. They deal neither with art nor with science. So why not consume? You believe you have a right to do it, because you work hard and deserve a rest. Yet having consumed art, science, and religion, you start consuming love.

Both sexual and romantic love. You just want your love to pleasure you without any consequences, without working on mental and moral education of your children, for instant, without any children at all. The result is that your nations simply will cease to be. That in a century, only Arabs will inhabit Paris, only the Turk will inhabit Berlin. Moreover, the result of worshipping sexual love is that your teenagers have their physical relations at the age of fifteen or sixteen, which damages their mind. They simply get silly. This is just what I mean.

You donât tend by physical relations. You keep consuming romantic love. Why does it never come into your mind that no thing in the Universe exists simply to pleasure you? Strong sexual emotions give birth to a child. Strong romantic feelings provide a basis of creative work. Of incorporating beauty. Consider Goethe, a German poet. Goethe could never write his poems if he werenât to constantly in love. This is a characteristic feature both of European and Indian art. Our art is not so splendid. We donât have glorious masterpieces of music, comparable to those of Beethoven. We donât need them, though. A healthy person never needs to take strong medicines. I think it were numerous spiritual illnesses of the West that gave birth to your old music, which can be both powerful medicine and powerful poison for your mind. I regard some works of your arts as the best your Western culture had ever created, as jewels of your civilization. I am not going to say that these jewels are numerous. You see, you neglect even them. You want to consume your romantic love without any effort of yours. Imagine that every one of you creates a beautiful thing, inspired by oneâts romantic love. Europe would flourish, then. You probably believe that you do. Well, anyone may believe in anything: in communism, in fascism, or in blossom of Europe.

There actually is an age at which a person is right to consume oneâ s romantic love without creating anything. The youth. A teenager is not capable of producing great things for the sake of humanity. However, a romantic love changes his or her mind for better. It is true for a teenager, not for an adult. A grown-up person, consuming romantic love, stays at the stage of a teenager. Consumption means getting pleasant sensation again and again. In this way a person becomes a slave of oneâ s own romantic feelings. These feelings become oneâ s drugs. Pay attention that your whole culture is built on the cult of romantic love. What do you do with yourselves? Why do you convert yourselves into helpless children?

You probably ask me, what you should do. I do not know whether I am capable of giving you a good advice. Even the best advices never work. I will try, however. Here you have one.

Robots

Western society is built upon machines. You live with them and even within them. And among them, too. Donâ t tell me that the environment doesnâ t influence the mind. It surely does. We Tibetans are not very tender. That is why our mountains never were. To live in Tibet, one must be as strong as a yak. Mountains are peaceful, though. You cannot fight with mountains as you do with the jungle. If you run too fast along a mountain path, you will fall down from a rock and die. That was why we never were too aggressive. Just strong, hard-working, a bit retired people. It was mountains that formed our national character.

It was forests that formed yours. I am far from criticizing European culture. It used to be a beautiful one. Your composers grew up in forests, so to say. They always could go for a walk in a forest. There was something in your forests which inspired them. Now you have got few forests. You probably still have some, but of what

use are they if they are too far from your big cities? You have got your machines instead. Every kind of machines: cars, computers, mobile phones, lifts.

I donâ t say machines are bad. As I was a child I should be happy to get a washing machine. Bad is that they had become your entire environment. Your environment forms your characters.

So you had become like human machines, at last. Like robots.

You will say: ah, thatâ s an old comparison. An old metaphor. We know it for ages. You are mistaken. Itâ s not a metaphor. Itâ s simply reality. And even if you know it, so what? Are you proud of it? Some of you may even be. Do you find it all right?

Now you begin to disagree. You say: it surely mightnât be so worse. We arenât trobots. Some of us may be, but most of us are educated people, healthy both physically and mentally, free from your Asian complexes and slavish devotion to idols and tyrants. Have you any proofs that we are robots?

Well, I have plenty of them.

A machine is driven by commands. It cannot perceive reality as it is. For a machine, it is too difficult. So you enter some commands, some words into a machine and it reacts. Its reactions may be very difficult. Very â intelligentâ . But one thing you cannot change, though: a machine always depends on words. And it always reacts in the same way. It never changes.

It is exactly the way you live your social life.

Getting acquainted with a person you first of all are eager to learn what he or she is. It means how one earns oneâ s money. You attempt to state oneâ s value. You are grown great masters of this value-stating. You do it not simply by a visit card, but also by clothes one wears, by manner one speaks, by words one uses, and so on, and so on. A person is always wider than its profession, title, or social habits. But you donâ t pay attention. You learn that this one is a scientist. That one is a taxi-driver. Another one is a priest. This information is a â commandâ, an â inputâ according to which you act. At your schools or in your family you were told how to behave with scientists, taxi-drivers, and priests. You were pre-programmed, so to say. You may follow those programs or not, it doesnâ t matter. They stuck in your mind. If you arenâ t religious (very few Westerners are, in fact), you probably donâ t respect priests. You may criticize them, show them your lack of respect, and even scold at them. It matters nothing. You behave like that because they

are priests. So some of you automatically start to feel aversion towards a priest however good the priest may be. It is so because in your youth you were re-programmed by atheistic ideas or by some â gurusâ of the Western world. And if not, something just went wrong with your machine. The computer of your mind caught a virus. It broke down under the heavy burden of lies your head was stuffed with. The program had a so-called bag. So now you insult your priests and think yourselves to be â free individualsâ . Nothing of the sort. You are just acting in accordance with your new prejudice, with your new mental program. If you were really free from prejudices you first of all should ask WHO a person is. Who he is and not what he does. You would try to learn him instead of classifying him. If you did so you would learn that even a Catholic priest or a Communist may be a good person. And even an activist of â Greenpeaceâ or a volunteer who helps aged people may be a bad one.

When I arrived at Europe I was told that a big number of people show respect to me just because they respect me personally, as an individual. I was surprised to learn it, for I knew that most of my admirers had had no chance to get acquainted with me or to listen to my teachings before. Yet the managers who accompanied me attempted to persuade me, that it was precisely so. Then, all of a sudden, hard times came. I was told to be a bad person, a pseudo-lama. I became ill and, to crown it all, had no money. Some good people helped me without asking much what I am. At that time I was nothing. An outsider, A beggar, And where were my former admirers? I still was the same I had been. Only one thing had changed. The word. The label. The command, which prescribed how to perceive me, how to behave with me. A big crowd of people started to believe in this single word: pseudo-lama. Well: imagine that I really am one, cruel and ignorant. Why not see it at the first or at the second glance? Is it really so difficult, to notice oneâ s cruelty and ignorance? It is difficult, however, if you are a robot. A robot always executes commands. It never perceives what really happens. It never thinks by its own way. You may think that it is only the personal insult which now leads me to speak about your robotized mind. You are mistaken. You really are. I donâ t care much for myself. A monk can exist everywhere. I began to talk about this Western mental machinery after my first week spent in Europe, when I was listened to with much enthusiasm. Yet I couldnâ thelp saying the truth. I wasnâ t going to preach â sweet harmless Buddhismâ . And I still donâ t want it.

You probably contradict me. You say that one cannot help judging others by their profession. That you have much more compassion and personal feelings for your nearest, for the people you love. At the first glance it seems to be true. But in fact you just change the label. You put on your friends, relations, and beloved another label. Having put it on them you begin to call a former taxi-driver or a former scientist your sweetheartâ . But all your sweethearts are somehow similar. You treat them all in the same way. You act in accordance with the program â partnerâ which was put into your mind, without analyzing much what kind of a person your partner is. You allow them to have physical relations with you and to care for you. To cry â Oh, dear!â and so on. But in reality you have no much interest in them, neither do they. You donâ t study your partners. And you never reflect. Someone told you that a partner is a closest person to you. That now you have everything in common. That your partner shares all your ideas and convictions, and so probably do you. It is simply not true. He or she neither shall do it nor does it actually. PEOPLE DIFFER. Studying your partner would be of much use for you. You probably could learn something from him or her, as well as your partner could learn from you. Sympathy begins with understanding another person. With studying one. Having studied your partner some of you would probably realize that you have no much love for one. And even in case a true love exists relations are not bound to be similar. Some of your beloved can help you, others need your help. One can be hurt by your coarse words; another will be insulted, if you are too gentle with him. And so on. But you never reflect, never distinguish. You act as robots, executing the same program. As soon as the label â partnerâ is put on a person, you take you partner into your bed, allow sweetheartâ , and begin to regard one as another part of yourself. Why, he or she has one to call you â

never been it. Sooner or later, something goes wrong. The â sweetheartâ ceases to be â sweetâ, â tenderâ, and sexy. Then you separate. And probably begin accusing another sex. After your first divorce you believe that men can never understand a woman. Not such a difficult one as you, at last. That women can never understand a man. Surely not such a deep one as you. Did you do anything to understand your first partner, though? I donâ t speak about everyone. I am glad to know that there still are exceptions. These exceptions will be in lesser numbers each year. They will be in lesser numbers because of the robotized mind which simply puts a label of a â partnerâ on a person instead of studying one.

As for much esteem you have for your nearest and dearest ones, I doubt of it. What is esteem? You respect a person if you are devoted to one, if you find one superior to you, if you easily believe what the person says or at least appreciate one a s words, if you don a t mind doing something to please one, if you do it sincerely and without any selfish interest. Donâ t mix up esteem with idolizing. In case you idolize one you worship the person as a god. In case you esteem one you perceive the person as a human being, you know why one deserves your respect. Western people have many idols. However, the most of you are hardly capable of respecting anyone. Not even your parents. You seldom follow your parentsâ advices. You often argue with them. Why, you donâ t even respect your god, Jesus Christ. Do you really do much to please him? Did you give up all you have got, as he taught you to do? Did you ever give up something you have got for his sake? Did you ever refuse the smallest of your silly ideas, selfish desires, or bad habits? Each religion starts from respect, from esteem, from devotion. Not from philosophy. It also may rest on idolizing, but then it simply degrades to fanaticism. How could we Tibetans, we poor folk master the immense difficulty of Prajña Paramita, if we didnâ t have our true love and devotion to Buddha, the Great Teacher? You see, you donâ t even respect your god and teacher which is, to my opinion, more than a god. Gods are many, good teachers are rare. A machine is not capable of having religious feelings. Religion is something beyond words. But you cannot go beyond.

This lack of respect combines with your lack of mental independence. Again you seem not to believe me. You believe all of you have independent opinions. You believe you never allow others to influence your ideas and convictions. Itâ s not true. You do argue with others, simply from a childish desire to argue. But only few Westerners think by their own way. You are awfully afraid no to be original. Afraid to be like others. You awfully want to differ from the crowd. Aiming this you can do anything. You can even take Refuge in Triple Gems. What does it matter? Taking Refuge or becoming a Communist is just a way you re-program yourselves. You just stop executing program called â Christianityâ and start executing program called . But you are hardly able to execute the latter, because this Asian program requires much sincerity. You are as well afraid of thinking independently as of being said to be mediocre. Looking originally and thinking independently is not the same. Your thinking must always proceed in accordance with theories; you always must go the way other people go. If by a chance an idea which has never been before enters your head you simply ignore it, because you have no tools to work on this idea. If a genius appears you immediately make one a laughing-stock. You keep despising one, criticizing one, and throwing mud at one until it turns out that this one is a real genius. A robot simply cannot think by its own way. Its independent thinking has nothing to rest on. Your thoughts are to rest on reality. But itâ s only words you stuff your head with.

An independent thinking is not always â originalâ . Throwing mud at priests or admiring homosexuals is, to your opinion, very original, because it is something that breaks traditions. Traditions might be of great use, however. On the contrary, studying Dogmatics bores you immensely. You are afraid one might call you

 \hat{a} dull fishes \hat{a} , mediocrities if you start studying it. Yet someone who does think independently does \hat{a} t care what label is given to him.

Remember 1932. The year, in which Adolph Hitler became the head of Germany. As soon as he did he declared that Germany shall go back to its Middle Ages, shall once again become an empire of your European Middle Ages. Hitler did think independently. He most probably was inspired by demonic powers, but a robot he wasnâ t. If such an idea entered one of your heads you would surely declare the person mad. But Hitler you didnâ t. Quite the contrary: it had turned out that Germans had for ages been dreaming of it. I donâ t blame you. I just want to show you how easily someone who has no true opinion of oneâ s own is re-programmed.

You may think that there is a domain in which you still stay more or less spontaneous. I mean religion. A domain less robotized than other domains of your life. It may be so, may be not. I want to tell you a story I never told before. Once I was very eager to learn what a Catholic mass looks like. So I went to a church. Not in a monkâ s dress, of course. I believe I put on trousers and a shirt. There were laymen as well as nuns in the church. I listened to a sermon and to prayers. Then communion followed. I have nothing against Jesus so I t mind to take part at it. As you know, during a communion small wafers which symbolize the body of Jesus are used. As for laymen, the priest put these wafers directly into their mouths. As for nuns, they stretched out their hands, and the wafers were laid on their palms. I didnâ t see much difference. However, as I am a monk, I stretched out my hand, too. The wafer was laid on it. I went back to my place. Then one of the nuns turned her head and gazed at me with gleaming eyes. She surely blamed me, because I broke common rules. I believe she even blamed the priest, for his having laid the wafer on my palm instead of putting in into my mouth. How sorry I felt for this old nun! Of course, one shouldnâ t be provocative during a ritual, I understand it very well. One never should hurt religious feelings of other people. But I sincerely didnâ t mean to be provocative. And it werenâ t religious feelings I hurt. It was altering a command the nun was angry with. Some of few people of West who still remain religious are terribly afraid of altering even the smallest detail in their religion. Donâ t you forget that machines always proceed in the same way? If a single letter of a program is altered a machine cannot execute it. Well, we Tibetans are rather conservative in our rituals, too. Yet we never perform rituals only for the sake of rituals. We donâ t mind altering our old rituals, we donâ t mind inventing new. We never believe that performing a ritual guarantees some spiritual achievement in the way in which starting washing machine guarantees clean linen. But you Western people are persuaded that a machine always performs its job. So you believe that prayers and communion will perform theirs. After your death, many of you will be very surprised to learn that they hadnâ t. Why, communion is not a machine. Neither is Jesus one. If you perceived reality, not words, you would notice that performing rituals mechanically never changes anything. I just cannot realize how some of you can go to church for many years and be exactly as they had been. Only a robot can perform an action for many years without being changed. Of what use is religion if it never changes anything in your mind? For a human being, religious activity like this is of no use. For a robot, it is useful, though. It puts into the human machines the old lies Western society is built upon. It lets you feel like having performed your religious duties, so that you may remain a good robot. In a religion, no duty can ever exist. Nobody is obliged to become better. Nobody is obliged to achieve Enlightenment. Yet some of you fancy that Enlightenment will be achieved instantly after your death, that Jesus saves all of you from samsara. That going to church and refraining from crimes is the only thing required for it. This idea could spring only from a robotized mind, from a mind that deals with machines and believes the mysterious thing you call â Godâ to work as a huge enterprise. I donâ t blame your priests. Even a best priest can change nothing when he preaches to machines.

And, last but not least, ita s only practical sense you think of. Why, no engine is created just to admire it. Each engine has to work. You Western people believe laboriousness to be the main human virtue. If it really were so, each engine would reach Enlightenment much sooner than you. Did you ever see a saint machine? A human being can admire beauty. A robot simply cannot. It lacks in the part of its mind responsible for perceiving beauty. And it is quite comprehensible, because beauty is perfectly useless for business matters. You will tell me that it is not so. That you still have your philharmonic societies, that your school students still study Shakespeare, Dante, Goethe, or any author belonging to your Western cultural treasure. Did you ever think how you behave with your cultural treasure? Most pragmatically. You were told by your school teachers . You human machines are not capable of realizing the beauty of his that Goethe is â a capital thingâ poetry by yourselves. However, you do believe in your teachers and scientists, and they keep praising Goethe. They do it almost mechanically, to say the truth. They, too, are robotized. Nonetheless, they do their job; they old faith in cultural treasuriesa . So you let Goethe, the poor man, be. But, as poetry cannot help boring robots, as it is awfully dull for them, you attempt to make your Goethe comprehensibleâ . You simplify your great authors. You translate their works into the vulgar slang of your teenagers. You probably think that vulgarizing them is better than giving them up at all. That a half or even a third of â the treasureâ is better than nothing. You think as each robot would think. Well, if you reduce the capacity of a machine the machine still remains useful. But if you â reduceâ your Dante he simply ceases to exist. His whole beauty is completely destroyed. This is a thing only a human being is able to realize. A fact a robot will ever fail to understand.

If you ceased to be robots! Only a human being can reach Enlightenment. Buddha said nothing about robots although He surely used to know some. Donâ t believe in words. Donâ t label people. Study them carefully, especially your nearest ones. Let each of your relations be unique. Respect those who deserve to be respected. Donâ t let politicians or newsmakers guide you. Donâ t be afraid not to be original. Give up your faith in robotized rituals, which might be effective in a miraculous way, without any effort of your mind. Develop your sense for beauty. Then you might get a chance to escape from a steel cage of samsara no robot can escape from. Why, a robot is made of steel. How can it go beyond the substance it is made of?

Democracy

There are things Western society does like in Buddhism. Our calmness, our almost scientific analysis of the mental domain, our lack of religious ecstasy and fanaticism. There are things it doesnâ t. Our aristocracy. Our deep respect and admiration towards religious teachers which is not democratic to your European taste. To American taste neither.

Democracy is a kind of god for you Western people. You have two main gods: Jesus and Democracy. And these two gods have been fighting with each other until now. Right now, at the beginning of the twenty-first century, the latter seems to triumph. Now you worship your Democracy much more than Jesus.

Making ideas to gods is not very good. Making wrong ideas to gods is fatal for a nation.

Now you may ask me, â Why is democracy a wrong idea?â Or maybe is it me who is wrong when thinking it wrong?

Well, it is quite easy to make people worship a god; it is quite difficult to make them just a little bit cleverer. I will try, though.

You may know that there were four varnas in the old Indian society. The Brahmans, the kshatrias, the vaishyas, and the shudras. The priests, the managers, the merchants, and the servants. These four varnas are in each human society. There are in your Western society, too. Donâ t think it to be so easy. You may count yourselves to priests, because you are intelligent enough and have got a good education. But in fact most of you are shudras. Why? Because you earn your money by doing your service. By doing what another people want you to do. There is a difference between a Brahman and a shudra. The former always says what he wants, be it pleasant or not, and he earns his bread for it. The latter says what other people want him to say. Do you really think that your job at school, or in a newspaper, or in an office allows you to say something you really want? Donâ t be naïve. Naivety is a vice. For a Buddhist, at least.

There are different ages of humanity. Each age allows one of four varnas to dominate the other.

There was a time, many millennia ago, when priests prevailed. When no king could do anything against their will. This regime is called theocracy. Tibet was the only country that remained theocratic until the middle of the last century. Until 1959.

Then times came when soldiers shoot the priests down, as in Tibet after the Chinese invasion, and began to rule. It was not always as bad as in 1959. There had been kings who protected and helped their priests and monks, someone like the king Bimbisara, Buddhaâ s donator, or the glorious king Ashoka. In any case, a soldier cannot exist without an officer, and an officer cannot be without officerâ s pride. This regime is called aristocracy. Priests are bad managers, to be honest. They are always a sort of dreamers. Dreamers are very important for a culture. There is no religion and no art without them. But a dreamer never can manage a state well enough. So there is a good reason why the kshatrias conquer the Brahmans. The warriors are courageous, strong, and clever. You canâ t help being clever if your life depends on your cleverness. Donâ t forget that Buddha was not a priest. He was a kshatria, a warrior. He wasnâ t a dreamer but for few moments of His glorious life. He was a perfect manager and scientist.

However, people get tired even of the best managers. The best are always few in numbers. Remember it well. Nobody likes when the few prevail upon many. And there is almost no â private lifeâ during the age of aristocracy, too. A knight can be poor and proud. A tradesman never can. It is so boring to be poor and proud, or poor and afraid of the proud! So a new revolution starts, and the kings lose their crowns. Now everybody wants to be a politician. Anyone, too, gets the way to be it. The election. The parliament. The meetings. This regime is called democracy.

Now meditate. I donâ t mean meditation on Buddha. Just meditate. Think. Analyze.

Did it ever come into your mind that the good are always less in number than the bad? Just buy a dozen of books, or films, or listen to a dozen of lamas, and examine it by your own eyes and ears. People that are honest, courageous, and clever, are always in small numbers. Everybody cannot be clever and strong. This â everybodyâ cannot help being mediocre. That is what the very essence of each democracy is: the power of mediocrity.

And then the shudras, the servants or the slaves, come. Somebody who is the loudest. The rudest. Because it is slaves who has got the worst education or no education at all. Somebody who fights for his â rights of minorityâ , like homosexuals or harlots. Somebody who triumphs, at least. Somebody who rules over the three quarters of a modern society. And who always forces the other to do what he wants, both in economical and the intellectual domain. Because an ex-slave cannot help forcing others, exactly in a way he was forced. He simply cannot help doing in another way. The slaves want to take your free will away and to make you equal with them. Then it is democracy.

Democracy is built upon three ideas of the French revolution. Freedom, equality, and brotherhood. These ideas seem to be very attractive. But in fact we are cheated by them.

First of all, a warrior or a priest is never equal with a slave. An elephant is not equal with a mouse. You let an elephant starve by giving him the same portion of food as to a mouse. But it is exactly what you Europeans do now.

And then freedom. I. e. freedom for the slaves. Freedom by itself is very good. But you must realize that slaves are the rudest. Kshatrias are ruder than Brahmans: that is why the former conquer the latter. Vaishyas are ruder that kshatrias. And shudras are the rudest. The strongest. If you set free both a sheep and a wolf, the wolf will kill the sheep. If you set free both Beethoven and Michael Jackson, the latter will triumph over Beethoven. Beethoven and Jackson. An honest wife and a harlot. A heterosexual and a homosexual. OK, say you Western people, it is democracy and freedom, it is a natural struggle for life, and the sheep had had its right to fight. It was its fault that it never got teeth and claws, you say. Allow me to dislike the freedom of this kind, though. Jesus, your teacher, called himself a shepherd, and a shepherd looks well after his sheep. He does. You donâ t.

And brotherhood. Regarding other people as your brothers is very good. But in fact there cannot be any brotherhood without compassion. How can you make a sheep believe in wolf being its brother, or vice versa? Do you wish your mother or your daughter to regard a lesbian or a harlot as her sister? Did you ask her whether she wants it? People do can be united; do can be brothers and sisters to each other. But this brotherhood starts by growing your bodhichitta, your sincere wish to achieve Enlightenment for the sake of all living beings. By Dharma. Slaves have no much Dharma. Dharma is of little use for them. They find it boring.

You donâ t seem to agree with me. You say only Democracy can prevent a nation from being tyrannized.

Well, think now about your own history.

Do you remember Adolph Hitler, the leader of the German national-socialists? Do you remember that the fascists were a political party? That the â nationalistsâ took part at the German election in 1932? That they WON the election? The Hitler party won the election in 1932 in a democratic way. How dare you say now that your Democracy excludes bloody tyrants?

Or is here anybody who still dares to compare His Holiness the Dalai Lama and George W. Bush, the American president who started the invasion of American troops into Iraq? His Holiness the Dalai Lama never was elected. The way of His education never was determined by mediocrities or slaves.

One year ago, my opinion was asked whether a lama can be elected from the members of a religious community and so become its leader. He surely can. A â lamaâ is just a word, a conventional one, there is no such thing as â lamanessâ which exists independently and by its own way, somewhere in the air or in the sky. You may elect each lama you want. But are you sure he will be a good one?

How can you become sure of it? There is only one way of finding a good lama: the feeling you do get better by following his advices. Getting better is never VERY easy. Therefore, lamaâ s words never can be VERY pleasant to you. If you are wise enough to choose a man whose words arenâ t very pleasant (something which seldom happens), then there is surely no harm in electing a lama by a democratic election. Democracy is neither bad nor good by itself, by its own way. (The same is true for all things, as you know.) It is good when people are good, bad when people are bad. Somebody chooses Buddha and somebody elects Hitler. This is how things exist now.

But a real lama, no matter appointed or elected, never can be a friend of the modern Democracy. What is a â friend of Democracyâ? It is somebody who lets vice have its rights. Somebody who says that

homosexuals should be allowed to marry. Children should be allowed to disobey and neglect their parents. Rebels should be allowed to shoot at soldiers of a regular army. Students of theology should be allowed to know nothing from the Tipitaka, the Quran, or the Bible, simply because they dislike it. Erotic maniacs should be allowed to produce films. Perversity and ingratitude, hatred, ignorance, and lust are allowed and welcome in a democratic society, because â everyone should be free and consume oneâ s freedomâ. But this freedom leads to the strongest slavery, when the three roots of evil become your tyrants and you their slave.

A lama is not a person who permits hatred, ignorance, and lust. He is someone who cures them. Someone who forbids. So he is easily said to be an â enemy of Democracyâ . Tant pis, how you Frenchmen say. So much the worse. So much the worse for Democracy.

I am neither a politician nor a person engaged in politics. A monk cannot be one. So why so many words about democracy? Because it influences the modern education and religious life of West, as well as your political life.

Imagine that you are a teacher. Imagine that there are three or four lads in your school who want to read Shakespeare or Goethe. Imagine that the other students have no wish to read these poets. So what will you do if you are a democratic teacher? You will let your students decide about the things they wish to study. No Shakespeare, no Goethe. A couple of modern mediocre authors instead. The result is that your students will become low-minded and selfish persons, quite loathsome, in fact. But your work will surely be admired and applauded by all â friends of Democracyâ.

Or imagine for a moment that you have become a priest. So what will you preach to your parishioners? Will you force them to get rid of their hatred and ignorance? Well, just try to bore them by sermons of that kind. There surely will be another preacher just round the corner, someone who tells them that Jesus loves all of them. Without excepting murderers, harlots, and liars. That Jesus himself is a great friend of Democracy. It is his church, not yours, which will get crowded, itâ s him who will get his money, and itâ s him, who will win. And itâ s you who will lose. Itâ s you who will be cynically asked, â Why are you so poor if you pretend to be so clever?â

And think meanwhile: how could Jesus be a friend of Democracy? A democrat wishes to make people equal. Jesus, who never was equal with other people, wanted his followers to be like him. He wanted them to DIFFER from anyone, to go their own way. As well as Buddha did.

You will ask me what you are to do in a new democratic world, which way you are to go.

Stop whishing to be mediocre. Dare to be cleverer than others. Look for the splits of the old aristocratic culture. Study them carefully. You may find genuine gems among those splits as I have found them in the European music. Forget about your democratic rights. Realize that you are far from being a Buddha. Realize that you are much more like a swine than a human being. Then look for a good tyrant of your mind, a true kshatria, honest, clever, and strong. Somebody who will bind you and beat you until your hatred, lust, and ignorance are dead for ever. You will be happy if you find a good tyrant. But there are really few of them in the age of Democracy. So become your own slave and your own tyrant in case you cannot find one. The freedom of the modern world leads to slavery, but your free-will slavery will lead you to the Ultimate Freedom. Go to war. Go to the war with your obstacles. Never forget that your obstacles are strong. That they may kill you before you kill them. Then fight. Struggle with all your might. Never listen to shouts of the crowd. People of crowd seem to be much cleverer than you, but it will be you, not them, whom your obstacles will murder, if you listen to the crowd. Never stop this most noble fight. You will win, sooner or later. This is a thing the Tathagata promised to all His soldiers. Donâ t you believe Him, the Tathagata? Then what do you believe in? In Democracy? A miserable belief. Donâ t care for friends of Democracy. Why should you care for them? Why shoul

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