Dreaming about Future Tibet
A Talk by Prof. Samdhong Rinpoche
Former Kalon Tripa
(Prime Minister of the Central Tibetan Administration)

Presenter: It is not necessary to introduce Prof Samdhong Rinpoche again, though there are many things we could say about him, but perhaps, he will not like to be praised; anyhow, he is someone really remarkable and we are really happy to have him here with us.

He had come here a few years back, and spoken to a group of us about a small booklet that he had written on The Future of Tibet.

For most of us, it was very inspiring.

It was about Rinpoche's dream for a future Tibet.

To dream is important. Isn’t it his capacity to dream that makes a human being very different from other species?

If you have read the newspaper about what has happened in Tibet during the last few days, you may have seen that many people have been killed, many people have been arrested. Monks and nuns have immolated themselves. If one looks at the situation in Tibet and elsewhere, it's very grim, it is very depressing.

At the same time, one should not stop dreaming. And Prof Rinpoche among his many qualities, is one of the few Tibetans, along with his Holiness, the Dalai Lama, who, despite the present, has been able to dream about the future of Tibet.

What will happen in the future on the Roof of the World? What is the ideal
society that Tibetans would like to live in? We would like to request Prof Samdhong Rinpoche to speak about his dream. Regardless of today’s political situation, what should be the Tibet of tomorrow? What are your dreams for Tibet? What is for you, Rinpoche, the Perfect Tibet? Respected Rinpoche, may I request you to speak about this subject?

Prof Samdhong Rinpoche:

My greetings to all, friends.

To be in Auroville and this part of the world is very sacred for all of us. I always feel pleased to come here and to meet the people who have chosen this very different way of living. You asked me to talk to you about my dream of future Tibet.

There are certain limitations: first of all, my knowledge of the English language is very inadequate and I may be unable to express myself adequately.

Secondly, the subject is very difficult at this present moment. If you ask any think tank, any political analyst or political watcher, they will tell you that they do not see any future for Tibet as country or for the Tibetan people as a people.

The genocide against the Tibetan people and Tibetan culture will be completed in the next two years; later, there may not be any future trace of the people and culture of Tibet.

This way of thinking, or this point of view, is not baseless. A political analyst draws his conclusions after considering the political, economic, military and population factors in the People's Republic of China, and on the Tibetan side, there is a very tiny population, and even without speaking of the military power, with no political, economical, social power; [therefore the conclusion that] Tibet can never regain its freedom.
At the same time, the entire world is in the race of appeasing the People’s Republic of China, considering it as an unlimited market. And markets are most important commodities in these modern days. Therefore, to appease China is always in the best interest of every nation and of their people. From this point of view, there is no future for Tibet. This analysis is based on the ‘real situation’.

But, some of us dream otherwise.

**Law of Casualty**

On this earth, many things are happening which are not simply accidents or coincidences. They come as a consequence of the law of causality: when there is cause, there is an effect. The law of causality takes its own full course and has its own dramatic changes and its own rhythm. There are unforeseeable dynamic forces.

Why to think this way? China has always much powerful than Tibet, right from the beginning of history, from times immoral. It is not that China overnight became powerful [in 1949]. And it is not only China, Tibet’s other neighbouring countries, such India and Russia, all of them were much more powerful than Tibet. This happened throughout the history. Tibet always remained with a population of a few million people. Although we have a large territory, we have no military power, no economic power.

The majority of people are peace-loving and spiritually minded. Despite this, Tibet has remained independent. Chine never ventured to occupy Tibet. British India invaded Tibet; their army captured its capital, Lhasa in 1904, but they did not occupy Tibet the way that they occupied India.

Immediately within a few weeks, they withdraw and offered a ceasefire agreement with Tibet. All this is history. Claude Arpi has so extensively written about it. Why did the British not occupy Tibet? They were Imperialists after all.
They wanted to extend their territory, but they did not occupy Tibet.

In the thirteenth century, Tibet was occupied by Genghis Khan and other Mongol generals, but eventually they remained only for 40 years in Tibet. They voluntary retired; though they later became more powerful and they even occupied China and established the Yuan Dynasty. Kublai Khan and his Mongols decided to give back Tibet its sovereignty to Sakya Dongon Choegyal Pagpa [as the appointed Tibetan ruler].

As I mentioned earlier, whether it was incidental or accidental - all these events have their own causality.

Take the great sage who is looking at us [Prof Samdhong Rinpoche is sitting in front of a photo of Sri Aurobindo]. He took birth on the 15th August. Do you think that it is an accident that India got her independence on the 15th August? That was also not a coincidence.

The law of causality is beyond human speculation and it takes its own course. Certain actions which are not in harmony with human nature and with the law of nature cannot sustain [themselves]; they cannot remain forever.

The situation inside Tibet, as briefly mentioned earlier, is horrible; but violence, ruthless violence can never sustain itself, unless there is a counter violence. The violence can only be sustained, when there is reaction and there is violence from both sides.

We Tibetans are happy, in fact, we are proud that Tibetans are committed to non-violence under the leader of His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama. Consistently Tibetans have remained non-violent. Despite all the provocations and unbearable inhuman treatment, they have not reacted violently. They have been humiliated; they did sacrifice their own lives; they did go through inhuman torture and atrocities, but, they did not react violently, and they did not kill any occupiers, they did not use force against the perpetrators. They
always try to remain non-violent. Therefore, because it is a one-sided violence, atrocities cannot remain forever. It may take a number of years, a number of decades, or it may change at any time. Political, social, economic changes are today unpredictable.

In the year 2011 we saw great changes through non violent activism. Nobody had predicted it; people did not expect it to happened, these things just came. Changes happened in the Soviet Union [at the end of the 1980’s], it was not expected so soon; the fall of the Berlin wall also happened suddenly, therefore, we have to keep dreaming for the future. We have to think about the future of Tibet as a people, as a nation.

When we talk of Tibet as a nation, we do not necessarily speak of political independence from People’s Republic of China. In fact, we are pursuing a Middle Path policy; we are not seeking separation from the People’s Republic of China, but [at the same time] we are not accepting the present system of governance. Avoiding these two extremes, we are looking for a genuine autonomy for the Tibetan people.

Tibet is a nation. It is accepted by the law of the People’s Republic of China; the Constitution of the People’s Republic of China clearly mentions that China is multi-nationalities country; China has 55 nationalities. All of them are [separate] nations; the people of the People’s Republic of China belong to different nationalities.

This is true even from the People’s Republic of China’s viewpoint. A nation does not necessarily have statehood; Nation-state is now almost a thing of the past. Many sovereign countries now choose to be associated in some a type of confederation; for example the European Union as well as many other groupings. By forming groupings, [nation-states] find it more convenient; it is better for the interests of their people.

We, Tibetans do not have an objection to remain as a constituent of the
People’s Republic of China, provided China give us the ‘genuine autonomy’ which is enshrined in the People’s Republic of China’s Constitution.

The principle of regional autonomy is valid for all the national minorities. [In China], there are several national minorities which do not live in any specific region. Therefore they will have only national autonomy, not regional autonomy. Some minorities will have national and regional autonomy, though this autonomy has not been granted to anyone as yet [by the Communist Party], although the People’s Republic of China exists for more than 60 years. During the last 60 years, [Beijing] has not implemented its own constitutional provisions for national autonomy for its minorities.

They shall have to implement this. The People’s Republic of China remains unchanged as of today; but it is almost impossible to continue to think this way.

If you look at the present situation from all angles, politically, economically and socially, the People’s Republic of China is on the verge of a great change. This change might occur in the near future or it might be in a foreseeable future, or it may take decades. Therefore keeping in mind this law of causality, Tibet, as a nation has a universal responsibility to think of our future. Therefore, we are considering the future of Tibet on the lines of Mahatma Gandhi’s dream of Swaraj. India got independence in 1947, but India has not realized as yet Gandhi’s idea of Swaraj. Perhaps that now the hope for attaining Swaraj becomes thinner and thinner, particularly if you look at the politics and the economics and specially the way the globalization forces have been welcomed by India during the past few decades.

We definitely believe that the future of Tibet is in the lines of Swaraj and particularly the principle which Gandhi very carefully, clearly and deeply explained, described in his treatise Hind Swaraj. This is the root text of the entire Gandhi literature, of all Gandhi’s writings.
Gandhi’s writings are very vast. They have now been published by the Government of India, they cover some 109 or 110 volumes. But all this vast corpus of teachings is mostly commentaries. The basic, the root-text is *Hind Swaraj* in which the term ‘Swaraj’ is well defined; Gandhi also, defined how to achieve the Swaraj. What are the means of achieving Swaraj? Particularly Gram Swaraj (village autonomy) which is exactly based on the principle of localization [compared to globalization]. The globalization is the greatest evil to destroy the entire human diversity; diversity of culture, diversity of thought, and diversity of consciousness.

The freedom of consciousness and the freedom to remain a unique individuality have been completely destroyed by the force of globalization and privatization. These three things are the most powerful instruments to take away all the basic individual rights. Individuals have no freedom to understand themselves; they have no freedom to understand what they are and what their needs are. They are being taught “these are your needs”. Their whole life is to be a life ‘in comparison’[with someone else] and a competition; throughout their life they have to struggle under stress to earn material things and accumulate money; before they accumulate enough money which could be used by them or for their near and dear ones, they have to die.

The other day, I was in Hyderabad and someone was telling me that today’s younger generation are destroying their health while earning money and after destroying their health, all the earned money is spent for restoring their health and often they are unable to work enough to restore it. I thought this is a true analysis.

If we really look at leading a worthy life for humanity, then we need freedom of consciousness, and freedom of self-recognition. Unless you know yourself, know who you are, and, what you are here for, you are just a consuming machine to serve the big industrial houses and consume their products, consume, consume, consume and finally they will consume you.

If our humane way of life is to lead a good, healthy and just life, we need good
health, independent mind, and a right livelihood based on [real] needs. It should not be based on greed. Gandhi again very accurately said that the mother earth is capable of satisfying all the living creatures but, the entire mother earth cannot satisfy a single person's greed.

Unless and until we ‘utilize’ things and not consume things and utilize them in accordance with our needs and produce in accordance with our ability, we will not live in accordance with the principle of right livelihood.

Right livelihood means a livelihood which does not depend on others or, is not exploiting others. If every being leads a livelihood through its own efforts in accordance with its own needs and without exploiting any other in the country, it can benefit to all sentient beings. This kind of system of life, system of living is the essence of Swaraj. It does not mean the self is ruling the others. Swaraj means that the self is within the control of the self: a centered self, not a self-centered.

As I mentioned before, China, India, Russia, all our powerful nations, did not occupy Tibet for centuries. But immediately after its establishment of a central government in China in October 1949, the People’s Republic of China did it. In the last week of October 1950, their troops were dispatched to invade Tibet, and by the first week of November, the border posts were captured. I still very much remember.

If you take a holistic view, many world changes have happened in this world during the last 300 years and particularly during the 19th century and 20th century; there were two World Wars and many undeclared wars and these are not separated and isolated incidents.

The fact that the occupation of Tibet by the People's Republic of China happened in 1951, two years after the establishment of the People’s Republic of China is not an accident. This is not the problem of Tibetan people only; it is not only a problem between China and Tibet. Thereafter, many unfortunate
things have happened, not only for Tibetans, for the entire China, for example the Cultural Revolution, or the Great Leap Forward and so forth.

All these are not just accidents. All these are symptoms of a larger human malady, a larger human problem.

Humanity has lost its humanness, its human values, its human character and its human ethics. Apart from religious ethics, there is a larger secular or ‘common human’ ethic. Being a human being, one has certain responsibilities. Humanity has lost his path, its human ethics, its humanness and that is why we encounter the enormous challenges that we are facing today. There is economic disparity. In spite of the creation of such enormous material wealth, we could not still remove hunger and poverty and remedy the unavailability of health care for a large, large section of humanity. This is not due to a shortage of material resources; it is only due to human inequality and lack of freedom for each individual. In spite of having all the material resources, we are not able to remove the poverty from humanity.

Today, if you calculate the daily earnings of the people living below the so-called poverty line; their income might have increased, but their psychological poverty has become much more intense than before. Before this kind of affluence was not so visible, and even the doing-well people are also feeling poorer, before they did not have three or four cars, and they did not live in a multistorey building. In spite of having a good house, good clothes, good food, it is not enough. They still feel poor. Unless a change for the better takes place at the global level, at the level of global consciousness these problems are not going to be solved, including the Tibetan problem. The Tibetan problem is problem of the People’s Republic of China as a whole, the largest populated country in the world today.

How to dream of the future of a small nation called Tibet with just 6 million people. Six millions is a 13th century figure, a census done by the Mongols and thereafter the number of our people remain the same and the People’s Republic of China’s survey says that in 2000, it has shown 5.4 millions only,
much less than 6 million (I do not have the results of 2010 census, it may have increased or decreased marginally).

As I mentioned earlier, to dream of a future of Tibet, we need to dream for the future of humanity. The Tibetan problem, the Chinese problem or the problem of economic disparity, violence, degradation of the environment, cultural and religious intolerance, all these are huge problems facing humanity. It is a larger or more pervasive human problem that we shall have to address.

We have to address this problem with a sense of responsibility which will have to be created within the human psyche, within the human consciousness. And for that, an entire difference kind of leadership and education is required.

Whenever I visit Auroville and in Pondicherry I always remember Sri Aurobindo’s words - ‘the regeneration or re-creation of India on the ruins of the West.’
The rebirth of India is very very important for a greater change at a human level. But unfortunately, the Indian leadership is busy in trivial things: corruption, law and order problems, elections, and so on and so forth.

The political leadership is corrupt, apparently from top to bottom; all are involved in corruption, but this does not represent India. India is still something very different. And [real] India has the greatest potential to bring a change in the world, at the level of the entire humanity. And that potential shall have to be awakened.

At this particular moment, everybody should work to awake the spirit of India as mentioned by Swami Vivekanda, by Aurobindo Ghosh, by Rabindranath Tagore and more recently by Jiddu Krishnamurti.

My last dialogue with Krishnamurti was in the year he passed away; before he went back to Ohio. It was our last dialogue (we were about 10 people with him), he asked us what is the uniqueness of India and what is India’s
responsibility.

We all responded to him; somebody said the importance of its geographical position, and so on and so forth. But he was not satisfied and he finally came back to the question.

The potential of India is the Spirit of India; it is not only the people, the territory, the flora and fauna, the Himalayas, the rivers, the mountains, the ocean, it is the totality of this - which has a great potential. A potential to save the entire living system and that is the Spirit of India. This potential, we need to awaken.

Therefore, the people at large who are not contaminated by political or economic corruption, who are still clean in the consciousness of this land, shall have to work together. By working together, I do not mean, come out in the streets and shout slogans. Work together means that we must create a collective will, a common will, and that common will or collective will, will evoke the potential of India.

Therefore, we may be able to transform this troubled world and Tibet can then be free. And if Tibet gets autonomy or freedom, then we are not thinking of using the word ‘development’. Today we are commonly using the term ‘development’, but the expression ‘development’itself is contaminated. If you look at the period before independence of India, before 1947, the ‘development’ word is not used as an independent expression. It always goes with something else, ‘development of land’, ‘development of mind’, ‘development of agriculture’ or ‘development of water irrigation’or something like that. But after independence of India, the word ‘development’ has become an independent word. It gives a very wrong direction to the entire country; it entirely destroyed the freedom of consciousness of the human thought. That is why we’re suffering.

So, if Tibet regained its genuine autonomy and freedom, we will not look for a
system based on ‘development’, we only look for ‘progress’.

The Mother spoke of so many ‘qualities’ in her teachings, and even in Matrimandir, each petal has a different attribute assigned to it, one petal is named ‘progress’; there is no petal called ‘development’.

Now I realize how the word ‘development’ has been contaminated. Bhutan, a small nation has come forward to gift a concept to the entire world, using the principle of Gross National Happiness (GNH), instead of GDP (Gross Domestic Product). GNH has been substituted to GDP and now many researchers are working on this concept. It is very much in consonance with Gandhi’s, Kumarappa’s ideas or Schumacher’s and other great economists.

In Tibet, we will not do anything against this principle. His Holiness the Dalai Lama has already mentioned a Zone of Peace, a Country of Environmental Preservation, these two principle are very clear.

As and when Tibet gets free, Tibet should be free from military presence, free from presence any destructive weapon, but Tibet should also not do anything which harms the environment.

In the Central Tibetan Administration [in Dharamsala], we have set four criteria to undertake any social, health, economic project. These four criteria are now applicable to nay project.

The first is non-violence. No project, directly or indirectly should be involved with violence. The second is ecofriendly; does a project harms the environment. The third is sustainability. Sustainable from both angles: sustainable from the angle of environment and sustainable from the angle of human behavior. And the last is that it should be beneficial to everyone; particularly beneficial to the poorest of the poor. Only if these four criteria are fulfilled, a project is undertaken otherwise, however attractive it may be or in today’s terminology, [it may have] a ‘great output’ potential, if these 4 criteria
are not present, we will do not accept the project.

In the future, when we shall rebuild Tibet, we shall also keep in mind these four criteria and thereafter a real Swaraj can prevail. Everything will be based on the law of causality, on law of nature; we shall not be fighting against the nature.

This is our dream. It means we shall have to build a non-violent society. Only a non-violent society can lead a real progress for humanity.

Thank you for your patience.