

# THE TREE IN THE BUDDHIST WORLD

## ARTISTIC AND ENVIRONMENTAL POINTS OF VIEW















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### The Tree in the Buddhist World

A series of books exploring the splendor of trees as magnificent living beings closely linked to Buddhist culture across Asia.

Accompanying the extraordinary photographs, world-renowned authors offer personal reflections on Buddhist culture, the environment and human welfare.

We hope this series inspires greater responsibility for the preservation and protection of the Tree as national and global treasures, essential to the survival of the continent's irreplaceable forests and all the sentient beings that depend on them.

### PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS

14 inches tall x 11 inches wide (36cm x 28cm)  
200 pages with over 100 full-color photographs





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### COUNTRIES

Bhutan, Cambodia, China and Tibet, India, Japan, Korea, Indonesia  
Laos, Myanmar (Burma), Mongolia, Nepal, Taiwan, Thailand, Vietnam

### POTENTIAL

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## A BUDDHIST MONK’S REFLECTIONS ON ECOLOGICAL RESPONSIBILITY

*H.H. The XIVth Dalai Lama  
Tenzin Gyatso*

During the course of my extensive traveling to countries across the world, rich and poor, east and west, I have seen people reveling in pleasure, and people suffering. The advancement of science and technology seems to have achieved little more than linear, numerical improvement; development often means little more than more mansions in more cities. As a result, the ecological balance—the very basis of our life on earth—has been greatly affected.

On the other hand, in days gone by, the people of Tibet lived a happy life, untroubled by pollution, in natural conditions. Today, all over the world, including Tibet, ecological degradation is fast overtaking us. I am wholly convinced that, if all of us do not make a concerted effort, with a sense of universal responsibility, we will see the gradual breakdown of the fragile ecosystems that support us, resulting in an irreversible and irrevocable degradation of our planet, Earth.









# BHUTAN









# THE SHELTERING TREE OF INTERDEPENDENCE

## A BUDDHIST MONK’S REFLECTIONS ON ECOLOGICAL RESPONSIBILITY

*Tenzin Gyatso The XIVth Dalai Lama*

1. O Lord Tathagata  
born of the Iksvakus  
Peerless One  
Who, seeing the all-pervasive nature  
Of interdependence  
Between the environment and sentient beings  
Samsara and Nirvana  
Moving and unmoving  
Teaches the world out of compassion

2. O the Savior  
The One called Avalokitesvara  
Personifying the body of compassion  
Of all Buddhas We beseech thee to make our spirits ripen  
And fructify to observe reality Bereft of illusion

3. Our obdurate egocentricity  
Ingrained in our minds  
Since beginningless time  
Contaminates, defiles, and pollutes  
The environment  
Created by the common karma  
Of all sentient beings

4. Lakes and ponds have lost  
Their clarity; their coolness  
The atmosphere is poisoned  
Nature’s celestial canopy in the fiery firmament  
Has burst asunder  
And sentient beings suffer diseases  
Unknown before

5. Perennial-snow mountains, resplendent in their glory  
Bow down and melt into water  
The majestic oceans lose their ageless equilibrium  
And inundate islands

6. The dangers of fire, water, and wind are limitless  
Sweltering heat dries up our lush forests  
Lashing our world with unprecedented storms  
And the oceans surrender their salt to the elements

7. Though people lack not wealth  
They cannot afford to breathe clean air  
Rain and streams cleanse not  
But remain inert and powerless liquids

8. Human beings  
And countless beings  
That inhabit water and land  
Reel under the yoke of physical pain  
Caused by malevolent diseases  
Their minds are dulled  
With sloth, stupor, and ignorance  
The joys of the body and spirit  
Are far, far away

9. We needlessly pollute  
The fair bosom of our mother earth  
Rip out her trees to feed our short-sighted greed  
Turning our fertile earth into sterile desert

10. The interdependent nature  
Of the external environment  
And people’s inward nature  
Described in the Tantras  
Works on Medicine, and astronomy  
Has verily been vindicated  
By our present experience

11. The earth is home to living beings;  
Equal and impartial to the moving and unmoving  
Thus spoke the Buddha in truthful voice  
With the great earth for witness

12. As a noble being recognizes the kindness  
Of a sentient mother And makes recompense  
for it So the earth, the universal mother  
Which nurtures all equally  
Should be regarded with affection and care

13. Forsake wastage  
Pollute not the clean, clear nature  
Of the four elements  
And destroy the well being of people  
But absorb yourself in actions  
That are beneficial to all

14. Under a tree was the great Sage Buddha born  
Under a tree he overcame passion  
And obtained enlightenment  
Under two trees did he pass in Nirvana  
Verily, the Buddha held the tree in great esteem



15. Here, where Manjusi's emanation  
Lama Tson Khapa's body bloomed forth  
Is marked by a sandalwood tree  
Bearing a hundred thousand images of the Buddha

16. Is it not well known  
That some transcendental deities  
Eminent local deities and spirits  
Make their abode in trees?

17. Flourishing trees clean the wind  
Help us breathe the sustaining air of life  
They please the eye and soothe the mind  
Their shade makes a welcome resting place

18. In Vinaya, the Buddha taught monks  
To care for tender trees  
From this, we learn the virtue  
Of planting, of nurturing trees

19. The Buddha forbade monks to cut  
Cause others to cut living plants  
Destroy seeds or defile the fresh green grass  
Should not this inspire us  
To love and protect our environment?

20. They say, in the celestial realms  
The trees emanate  
The Buddha's blessings  
And echo the sound  
Of basic Buddhist doctrines  
Like impermanence

21. It is trees that bring rain  
Trees that hold the essence of the soil  
Kalpa-Taru, the tree of wish fulfillment  
Virtually resides on earth  
To serve all purposes

22. In times of yore  
Our forbears ate the fruits of the trees  
Wore their leaves  
Discovered fire by attrition of wood  
Took refuge amidst the foliage of trees  
When they encountered danger

23. Even in this age of science  
Of technology  
Trees provide us shelter  
The chairs we sit in  
The beds we lie on  
When the heart is ablaze  
With the fire of anger  
Fueled by wrangling  
Trees bring refreshing, welcome coolness

24. In the tree lie the roots  
Of all life on earth  
When it vanishes  
The land exemplified by the name  
Of the Jambu tree  
Will remain no more  
Than a dreary, desolate desert

25. Nothing is dearer to the living than life  
Recognizing this, in Vinaya rules  
The Buddha lays down prohibitions  
Like the use of water with living creatures

26. In the remoteness of the Himalayas  
In the days of yore, the land of Tibet  
Observed a ban on hunting, on fishing  
And, during designated periods, even construction  
These traditions are noble  
For they preserve and cherish  
The lives of humble, helpless, defenseless creatures

27. Playing with the lives of beings  
Without sensitivity or hesitation  
As the act of hunting or fishing for sport  
Is an act of heedless, needless violence  
A violation of the solemn rights  
Of all living beings

28. Being attentive to the nature  
Of interdependence of all creatures  
Both animate and inanimate  
One should never slacken in one's efforts  
To persevere and conserve nature's energy

29. On a certain day, month, and year  
One should observe the ceremony  
Of tree planting  
Thus, one fulfills one's responsibilities  
Serves one's fellow beings  
Which not only brings one happiness  
But benefits all

30. May the force of observing that which is right  
And abstinence from wrong practices and evil deeds Nourish and  
augment the prosperity of the world  
May it invigorate living beings and help them blossom May sylvan  
joy and pristine happiness  
Ever increase, ever spread and encompass all that is

*Tenzin Gyatso*  
*The XIVth Dalai Lama*











# COMMENTARY ON H. H. THE DALAI LAMA’S POEM

*Robert Thurman*

In the iconography of the earliest monastic Buddhist art, stone carvings on temple and sanctuary walls, the Buddha was never represented as a human being, but rather by a symbol. It was sometimes a footprint, sometimes a wheel of teaching, and very often as a tree. He was born under a tree, attained unexcelled perfect enlightenment under a tree, and left his “emanation body” lying down between two trees. He did not “die,” as Buddhas do not need to die, as they are beings who have become infinite and immortal.

His Holiness the Dalai Lama is considered by many to be the closest thing to a Buddha in our age, though he refers to himself as a simple Buddhist monk. He once told me that he would like to be a “naturalist” in his next life; indeed he is a scientist and a conservator of nature in this life. Some years ago, he wrote the poem on the beauty and importance of the tree that is included in this volume. I will couch my reflections on the tree as a commentary on some parts of that poem.

*1. O Lord Tath gata / Born of the Ikshvakus / Peerless One  
Who, seeing the all-pervasive nature / Of interdependence  
Between the environment and sentient beings  
Samsara and Nirvana / Moving and unmoving  
Teaches the world out of compassion*

His Holiness salutes Shakyamuni, from the Ikshvaku lineage, who around 2500 years ago became the prime perfectly enlightened Buddha of our historical era. He salutes him as a Teacher. He can teach us well, since he became a “Tath gata,” one who understands the true nature of reality and so becomes enlightened—not a religious prophet, but a supreme realist, a perfect scientist. The reality he discovered was that of the total relativity of all things, their interdependent existence, including

the interdependence of animate beings and the inanimate environment. Even more radically, he discovered the conceptual interdependence of the relative and the absolute (Samsara and Nirvana). The absolute is the opposite of the relative but not a different relative thing, so necessarily just the infinite space in which the relative is free to exist; this being tantamount to their conceptual difference and actual oneness. Knowing their oneness through his wisdom, he experienced his relations with other beings and the environment as the absolute itself, and so as of absolute importance. This enabled him to feel the feelings of others, which made their sufferings intolerable to him, and so he felt an unlimited compassion for them. Finally, since he was overflowing with bliss due to his continuous experience of the absolute as all relative beings, he saw how beings would also become free from suffering, once they came to understand for themselves the true nature of reality as he had done. So the most compassionate thing he could do for them was to teach them how to experience that true nature, educating them to develop their own wisdom and experience for themselves the infinite bliss of reality.

*2. O the Savior / The One called Avalokite vara,  
Personifying the body of compassion / Of all Buddhas,  
We beseech thee to make our spirits ripen / and fructify  
So we may observe reality / Bereft of illusion*

Avalokite vara is believed to be the embodiment of the universal compassion of all buddhas who incarnates in all realms of existence simultaneously in innumerable different forms in order to help beings evolve toward enlightenment and its peace and happiness. He is called a “bodhisattva,” hero of enlightenment, and he is the Buddhist







conception of a savior. Though he can incarnate as a human or animal or any other sort of living being, even as a tree, he is thought of as divine. He has a god-like power of manifestation of whatever suffering beings really need and an inexhaustible determination to save them from suffering. As a savior figure, Avalokite vara can be either male or female, his main female form being better known in China as Kwanyin, in India and Tibet as the noble Tara. Buddhists call on their savior to help them “ripen,” evolve into more capable beings, human or divine, and most important to help them reach the fruition stage of experiencing the true nature of reality for themselves. An interesting insight into Buddhism comes from the fact that “fruition” is not mentioned as merely being salvation from suffering, though it is, and not merely installation in heavenly bliss, though it is, but as seeing reality clear and free of illusions.

*3. Our obdurate egocentricity  
Ingrained in our minds / Since beginningless time  
Contaminates, defiles, and pollutes / The environment  
Created by the common karma / Of all sentient beings*

This is the essence of Buddha’s vision of awakening, which implies core advice for us all. The Buddha saw how the root of all suffering lies in egocentricity, the misknowledge or misperception of our self as the most important, almost absolute, focus of our life. This distorted view puts us in the hopeless situation of opposition to the entire universe, which clearly leads to unremitting frustration. This misperception can only be overcome by the insight of wisdom that sees the voidness of, and hence freedom from, any presumed absolute self, thus restoring us to the awareness of inter-relatedness with all things that heals our alienation. Here the Dalai Lama does not elaborate the details of the process of individual liberation from the sickness of egocentricity, but moves directly to his subject, by asserting that it not

only causes us frustration and suffering but also contaminates and destroys the environment which we share with all other beings. So the first place we must look to preserve the environment is within ourselves, to see the fallacy of egocentricity that has dominated our outlook and actions and free ourselves from imprisonment within it.

*4. Lakes and ponds have lost / Their clarity, their coolness  
The atmosphere is poisoned;  
Nature’s celestial canopy in the fiery firmament / Has burst  
asunder  
And sentient beings suffer diseases / Unknown before*

Pollution of the waters, poisoning of the air, perforation of the protective ozone layer, and overheating of the whole eco-system can no longer be denied. Since we living beings share these elements of earth, water, fire, and air with the environment, we fall into the many new diseases which are nothing but our bodies’ incorporation of these same poisonings and imbalances in the environment. The ancient medical treatises prophesied a time when humans out of a combination of overall delusion and excessive manipulative cleverness would tamper with the elements for profit and thus introduce rampant epidemics which our species would be totally unprepared for.

*5. Perennial-snow mountains, resplendent in their glory  
Bow down and melt into water  
The majestic oceans lose their ageless equilibrium  
And inundate islands*

Though he wrote this some time ago, His Holiness predicts the melting of the glaciers planet-wide, nowhere more evident than in Tibet, where I personally have witnessed during twenty years of travels the 60 percent retreat of many glaciers.

*6. The dangers of fire, water, and wind are limitless  
Sweltering heat dries up our lush forests  
Lashing our world with unprecedented storms  
And the oceans surrender their salt to the elements*

The destruction of tropical rainforest goes on apace without relenting, as commercial greed ignores all warning signs, and chainsaws rip into giant trees that have taken centuries to grow. The lessening of CO2 absorption adds to the overheating cycle and drought, and some forests are simply burnt to grow commercial crops. The turbulence of rising heat plumes roils the winds and lethal storms rage around the planet, and soils are salinized as lowland areas are flooded.

*7. Though people lack not wealth  
They cannot afford to breathe clean air  
Rain and streams cleanse not  
But remain inert and powerless liquids*

No amount of money or treasure can buy clean air and water, and sicknesses debilitate and kill the wealthy along with the poor.

*8. Human beings / And countless animals / That inhabit water  
and land  
Reel under the yoke of physical pain / Caused by malevolent  
diseases  
Their minds are dulled / With sloth, stupor, and ignorance  
The joys of the body and spirit / Are far, far away*

The global crisis destroys life of all species and deprives even wealthy humans of joy and a sense of well-being. In poor countries people suffer from hunger and thirst, and diseases rampant with weakened immune systems go uncured. In rich countries diseases of indigestion such as obesity, cancer, and diabetes deprive the body of all ease, and depression becomes epidemic as evidenced by the massive consumption of legal anti-depressant drugs and illegal addictive drugs

*9. We needlessly pollute  
The fair bosom of our mother earth  
Rip out her trees to feed our short-sighted greed  
Turning our fertile earth into barren desert*

Oh Tibet, your primeval Eastern forests have been 75 percent clear cut by insatiable Chinese lumber crews! O Amazon, your forests are destroyed by thousands of acres a day! Now Chinese crews are spreading everywhere, Burma, Laos, Indonesia, Africa, Brazil, Siberia, British Columbia, and American, European, Russian, Japanese, and Chinese “consumers” are joining the thoughtless horde in the self-destructive race to consume the earth.

*10. The interdependent nature  
Of the external environment / And people’s inward nature  
Described in the Tantras, / Works on medicine, and astronomy  
Has verily been vindicated / By our present experience*

He reflects on the unerring reliability of the ancient predictions about how once people lose their sense of interconnectedness with nature and with each other by succumbing to the unrealistic ideologies of alienation and nihilism, whether spiritualistic or materialistic, their inner despair and dissatisfaction would project recklessly outward into the environment; causing the destruction of society and the planet itself.

*11. The earth is home to living beings;  
Equal and impartial to the moving and unmoving  
Thus spoke the Buddha in truthful voice  
With the great earth for witness*

Here His Holiness remembers the iconic image of Shakyamuni the historic Buddha of our age, sitting cross-legged in meditative posture and reaching with his right hand down past his right knee to touch the Mother Earth, calling her to witness his vast connectedness to all life throughout his beginningless previous lives, during which he had







lived as every conceivable species of being and therefore had all of their welfare realized in his heart. This “earth-touching” (Sanskrit bhumisparsha) gesture is rich with meaning on so many levels. In the drama of the Buddha’s life story, it indicates the Buddha’s answer to the challenge of the devil, Mara the tempter, who tries to lure him away from his fulfillment in enlightenment by challenging him that he has no right to rise above other beings into a supremely higher awareness. Buddha touches the ground to prove that he does not set himself above other beings, but connects with all of them, and he calls on his Mother Earth to bear witness, which she joyfully does. On another level, he touches the ground to indicate that, now he has perfected the realistic view that knows the true meaning of life, he knows for the first time what it means to be sitting on the earth; he experiences the true nature of earth, which is the embodiment of universal love. For earth is the solidity that gives beings resting places along their beginningless and nearly endless migrations through the swirling reaches of vast spaces filled with uncontrollable energies carrying them along like twigs on the surface of a raging torrent. Earth as universal love gives beings bodies they can use to calm themselves in, to reach out to each other with, to develop and evolve toward the infinite and blissful bodies of enlightened buddhas and bodhisattvas. And earth provides a home for those embodied beings as well, a nurturing ground for them to dwell on. So the Buddha touched the earth in his first deed at the threshold of enlightenment, touched her with vast love and trust, responding to her great motherly love, her solid wish for all our happiness.

*12. As a noble being recognizes the kindness / Of a sentient mother  
And makes recompense for it, / So the earth, the universal mother,  
Which nurtures all equally, / Should be regarded with affection and care*

In our present crisis, only responding with gratitude and love to our mother earth will inspire us to take the necessary steps and make the necessary efforts to save her from the destruction we have wrought upon her.

*13. Forsake wastage, / Pollute not the clean, clear nature  
Of the four elements  
And destroy not the well-being of people  
But absorb yourself in actions / That are beneficial to all*

He urges us to enact the ethical and spiritual imperative to conserve the elements of our planetary mother, the earth we have polluted by industrial waste and by chemical fertilizers that have entered the food chain and destroy our health. Water far out in the ocean is rife with mercury, plastic by-products, sewage from vast cities. The fire element is intensified, puncturing the ozone layer that protects our bodies from the harmful rays of solar energy, and we are not merely warming the planet, we are overheating it. And the air is filled with smoke and sulphur and coal dust and many unnameable pollutants, perhaps also microwaves, random electric vibrations. His Holiness urges us to awaken and cease and desist from such destruction of our own and others’, including future generations’, life-supporting planet.

*14. Under a tree was the great Sage Buddha born  
Under a tree he overcame passion  
And obtained enlightenment  
Under two trees did he pass away in Nirvana  
Verily, the Buddha held the tree in great esteem*

The Buddha’s human mother, Queen Mayadevi (her name means “Goddess of Magic Creativity”), was leaning against a flowering tree in Lumbini when she gave birth to him. Under the Bodhi tree, a type of fig tree, he sat for the final day and night of his complete enlightenment, a tree whose great grandchild stands in Bodh Gaya in India to this day.

And when he withdrew from the bodily emanation of his infinite presence, to teach people the lesson of impermanence, he lay down on his right side between two Sal trees. So he fused for us the tree of life, the tree of enlightenment, and the tree of utter transcendent bliss.

*15. Here, where Mañju r ’s emanation,  
Lama Tsong Khapa’s body bloomed forth  
Is marked by a sandalwood tree  
Bearing a hundred thousand images of the Buddha*

In the Amdo province of Tibet, at a place where the Kumbum monastery still stands today, close to the birthplace of the Dalai Lama, the great Lama Tsong Khapa was born in 1357. According to Tibetan custom the placenta from the birth was buried outside his parents’ house, and from it grew a magic tree, the bark of which was engraved with mantric syllables, the mantra of the bodhisattva of wisdom, Mañju r , A RA PA TSA NA DHIH, which also emerged from the veins of the leaves. In the eighteenth century a Capuchin missionary, Father Huc, sneaked out at night to examine the tree with his Swiss pocket knife, thinking it had been artificially carved by the monks to fool the pilgrims. To his shock he discovered that the mantras emerged from deep in the grain of the wood, and so were genuinely miraculous. That tree today has been covered over to save it from destruction by the communists who took over the area, but it may still survive in a hidden well.

*16. Is it not well known  
That some transcendental deities  
Eminent local deities and spirits  
Make their abode in trees?*

Trees are the abodes of nymphs and local deities the world over in most natural cultures.

*17. Flourishing trees clean the wind  
Help us breathe the sustaining air of life  
They please the eye and soothe the mind  
Their shade makes a welcome resting place*

The second century great south Indian master Nagarjuna told his disciple, King Udayi of the Shatavahana dynasty on the Deccan, to plant trees along all the roads and highways of his empire, to shade the travellers and their animals.

*18. In the Vinaya, the Buddha taught monks  
To care for tender trees  
From this, we learn the virtue  
Of planting, of nurturing trees*

The Vinaya is the Buddhist monastic Rule of Discipline, and hence a sacred source of the Buddha’s practical advice to monks and laity.

*19. The Buddha forbade monks to cut  
Cause others to cut living plants  
Destroy seeds or defile the fresh green grass  
Should not this inspire us  
To love and protect our environment?*

*20. They say, in the celestial realms  
The trees emanate  
The Buddha’s blessings  
And echo the sound  
Of basic Buddhist doctrines  
Like impermanence*

In the pure lands or Buddha-lands, such as the Sukhavati universe of Amitabha, the Buddha of boundless light, the trees actually teach the Dharma. They can be made of living jewel plasma, and radiate nourishing energy to heal and teach the bodhisattvas fortunate enough to take rebirth there, who rest and study and meditate for a while in that ideal environment, on their way to





their own buddhahood and creating their own buddhaverses. These realms are a little different than mere paradises, since they are environments that themselves teach living beings the true nature of their realities, and thereby liberate them from the suffering of living egotistically, ignorantly feeling separated from the universe. Whatever these realms may be, the Buddhist imagination is unparalleled in its envisionment of extraordinary environments, thereby encouraging us to discover and treasure the extraordinary in our environment.

*21. It is trees that bring rain  
Trees that hold the essence of the soil  
Kalpa-Taru, the tree of wish fulfillment  
Virtually resides on earth / To serve all purposes*

In Indian myth, the Kalpataru or Kalpadruma is the magical wish-granting tree that grows in the ordinary heavens and is deservedly famous.

*22. In times of yore  
Our forbears ate the fruits of the trees / Wore their leaves  
Discovered fire by the friction of wood  
Took refuge amidst the foliage of trees / When they encountered danger*

Here His Holiness merges his imagining of the Darwinian mythology with the Tibetan myth of how they descended from the primordial union of a bodhisattva monkey and a mountain demoness. He once joked how he would like to mediate between the creationists and the evolutionists, since the Tibetans also believed they were descended from God, but that God turned out himself to be a monkey!

*23. Even in this age of science / Of technology  
Trees provide us shelter / The chairs we sit in / The beds we lie on  
When the heart is ablaze / With the fire of anger / Fueled by wrangling  
Trees bring refreshing, welcome coolness*

Here one has the vision of the typical Indian village, where the elders sit around staying cool and discussing everything under the sun under the central spreading tree, usually a banyan or ficus or other tropical giant.

*24. In the tree lie the roots / Of all life on earth  
When it vanishes  
The land exemplified by the name / Of the Jambu tree  
Will remain no more / Than a dreary, desolate desert*

In the old Indian cosmology, the Jambu tree grows golden apples. From it, our continent takes its name, Jambudvipa.

*25. Nothing is dearer to the living than life  
Recognizing this, in Vinaya rules,  
The Buddha lays down prohibitions  
Like the use of water containing living creatures*

In these last verses, His Holiness expands his homage to the trees to animals and all of nature, showing the Buddhist cherishing of the mother earth and all her living creatures. This awareness is what made Tibet such a treasury of wildlife and healing herbs, until the Chinese invasion and occupation caused horrendous and widespread destruction.

*26. In the remoteness of the Himalayas  
In the days of yore, the land of Tibet  
Observed a ban on hunting, on fishing  
And, during designated periods, even construction  
These traditions are noble  
For they preserve and cherish  
The lives of humble, helpless, defenseless creatures*

In their high altitude environment, the Tibetans did eat meat, depending on their yaks especially. Browsing yaks were their beasts of burden, providers of milk products, wool, leather, sinew for ropes and hooks, bones for utensils, and so forth,



so they slaughtered them when necessary and dried their meat for long term protein supply. This was very much contrary to the Buddhist ideal of nonviolence, and so a few Tibetan lamas who had access to vegetables and a balanced diet without meat, became vegetarians when they could, and more of them have done so in India. The Dalai Lama himself was strictly vegetarian for several years when first in India, but after he came down with hepatitis, his people demanded that he occasionally use meat. At least since the seventeenth century, fishing and hunting were banned officially, though some people in outlying districts did ignore the ban.

*27. Playing with the lives of beings without sensitivity or hesitation,  
As in the activity of hunting or fishing for sport  
Is an act of heedless, needless violence  
A violation of the solemn rights / Of all living beings*

Henry David Thoreau was particularly offended by the sport of angling, having the poet's imaginative sensitivity to feel the pain of the fish when the hook bit into the inside of its cheek.

*28. Being attentive to the nature / Of the interdependence of all creatures  
Both animate and inanimate  
One should never slacken in one's efforts  
To persevere and conserve nature's energy*

Interdependence or total relativity can be said to be the central insignia of the Buddha's insight and teaching. Nothing is more necessary today for human beings to understand, in order for them to rise to the challenge of restoring the planet in its greatest hour of danger. We urgently need to cultivate such awareness of our total interconnectedness with all beings and things.

*29. On a certain day, month, and year  
One should observe the ceremony / Of tree planting*

*Thus, one fulfills one's responsibilities / Serves one's fellow beings  
Which not only brings oneself happiness / But benefits all*

I remember joining His Holiness in planting a tree at Gethsemane in Kentucky, on the grounds of the monastery where Thomas Merton lived. He was utterly happy and carefree for a little while, engaged in that simple act of faith in the future.

*30. May the force of observing that which is right  
And abstinence from wrong practices and evil deeds  
Nourish and augment the prosperity of the world  
May it invigorate living beings and help them blossom  
May sylvan joy and pristine happiness  
Ever increase, ever spread and encompass all that is!*

It is finally worth noting that the transcendent wisdom (prajnyaparamita) of selflessness which liberates us from suffering and brings us into enjoyment of Nirvana is not merely a state of abandoning the world in which other beings suffer. It is utterly the same as the discerning, ethical wisdom that knows right from wrong, which opens our hearts to release the supreme energy of universal compassion, which does not tolerate the suffering of any being and energizes our inexhaustible artfulness in leading others into their own freedom and bliss. His Holiness's final prayer resonates with the Noble Nagarjuna's immortal description of the supreme, nondual reality—“voidness the womb of compassion” (shunyata-karuna-garbham).

***Robert Thurman  
Punakha, Bhutan  
April 3, 2008***























CAMBODIA







































# THAILAND





































# MONGOLIA

























































