



Dalai Lama's teaching in Bodh Gaya: A lesson in compassion

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The yearly Buddhist teachings offered by the 14th Dalai Lama at Bodh Gaya, Bihar, made a comeback after three long years and the crowd that turned up was nothing short

of amazingly dynamic. Multiple interviews were conducted, a few with a Russian couple, a German nun, and our very own people from Arunachal.

When asked, and each of them replied unanimously that the biggest takeaway from the three-day-long teaching was compassion born from introspection. A young lady from Malaysia, when asked what Buddhism meant to her as a religion, said that Buddhism is truth for her. Her travel companion, another lady in her mid-twenties, said that Buddhism just "made sense" to her. Which brings me to the point that we must not take everything at face value.

Religion is not only a game of faith and belief, but it is also a game of fear – a fear of being punished, a fear of doing wrong in the eyes of the almighty. It acts as a moral compass and a disciplinarian simultaneously. Therefore, we can draw the conclusion that religion makes logical sense, for it draws a line and creates a boundary to curb the insatiable greed of humans.

The three-day-long preaching had compassion as its central theme. The religious leader advocated compassion and happiness that stem from oneself and are not superficial. The last day featured a ceremony called the long-life offering ceremony, which was basically to present the Dalai Lama with offerings and prayers for his long life.

Amid all the chaos and rush, it got me thinking: Bihar's countless local vendors and tourists (religious or not), the influx of diversity people-wise in this small religious site, people flocking from all corners of our nation as well as the world. It was a sight to behold for generations to come, for we are all dependent on each other and nothing, in my opinion, showcased it better than what I saw there.

People from Tawang, Dirang and Bomdila from our state were also present, their traditional attire on display on their bodies with pride. A young man from Tawang shared that "we are nothing without compassion" and that "we are all where we are today because we have compassion for each other." No truer words have ever been spoken.

We are but humans, hungry for love and acceptance. We may falter and stumble, make mistakes and create trouble, but we mend them and learn from them. We allow ourselves to do so because we have compassion for ourselves. We allow others to make mistakes because we have compassion for them. And compassion is what I witnessed during my short stay in the holy place called Bodh Gaya.

I would like to conclude by saying that, no matter how far our states may be from each other, we are all bound by one factor, and that is humanity. The compassion we have for each other as humans manifests itself in humanity and the conduit just happens to be religion. Therefore, religion is a binding force. A force that is extremely cohesive in nature if only we are willing to show compassion to each other. (The writer, a student of 2nd semester, O.P. Jindal Global University in an intern at this daily)
