

# Tibet and the Dalai Lama

*“For as long as space endures, and for as long as living beings remain,  
until then may I too abide to dispel the misery of the world.”*

— Eighth century Buddhist saint, Shantideva

**HIS HOLINESS THE 14TH DALAI LAMA OF TIBET, TENZIN GYATSO,**



**Early photo of His Holiness  
the 14th Dalai Lama**

was born to a peasant family on July 6, 1935 in the village of Takster in the Amdo area of northeast Tibet (present-day Qinghai Province). When 2-years old, he was recognized by a search committee of senior monks and Lhasa officials, in accordance with Tibetan tradition, as the reincarnation of the previous Dalai Lama. He was enthroned on February 22, 1940 in Lhasa, the Tibetan capital.

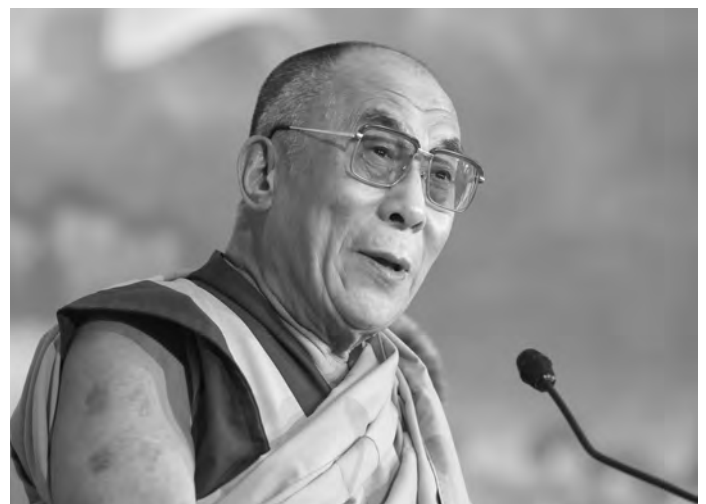
Fundamentally, the Dalai Lama is believed to be the manifestation of Avalokitesvara, the Bodhissatva of Compassion and the protector deity of Tibet who chooses to reincarnate to serve and help ease the suffering of the people. According to Tibet’s unique system, the Dalai Lama serves as both the temporal leader of the Tibetan people and the spiritual leader of Tibetan Buddhism. While over the centuries, influence over the Tibetan nation had expanded and contracted according to the ambitions of Tibetan leaders and their Chinese and Mongolian neighbors, from 1911 Tibet was effectively an independent country, with full control over its domestic and international affairs.

Soon after Mao Zedong proclaimed the establishment of the People’s Republic of China, he announced his intention to liberate Tibet from Western imperialism and, in 1949–1950, the People’s Liberation Army invaded Tibet. The regents in Tibet, holding governmental authority until the Dalai Lama reached his maturity, decided to install the 15-year old Dalai Lama immediately as the country’s temporal leader. In 1951, the Lhasa government sent a delegation for peace talks in Beijing. The delegation was compelled by threat of further military incursions to sign the “Agreement on the Peaceful Liberation of Tibet.” Three years later, the 19-year old Dalai

Lama himself traveled to Beijing where he was hosted by Mao. It was during their final meeting that Mao famously told the Dalai Lama, “Religion is poison.”

During the 1950s, thousands fled the implementation of socialist reforms in eastern Tibet, flooding Lhasa, and making the relationship between the Tibetan government and Beijing increasingly untenable. In 1959, an uprising erupted provoked by the fear that an invitation to the Dalai Lama extended by the Chinese garrison in Lhasa would result in his kidnapping or worse. The Dalai Lama was forced to flee for his life. Since 1960, he has resided in Dharamsala, India, where he has established a government in exile and sought to implement a democratic system of governance for the long-staying refugee community numbering around 125,000 Tibetans.

In the tradition of Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King Jr., the Dalai Lama has become one of the great proponents of non-violence and advocated peaceful solutions based on tolerance and mutual respect. For this, he has won the admiration of the world and was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1989 and the U.S. Congressional Gold Medal in 2007.



**Nobel Peace Prize winner, the Dalai Lama, acknowledged as  
one of the world’s greatest men of peace**