

# The Meaning Of Compassion

*His Holiness The Dalai Lama*

I would like to explain the meaning of compassion which is often misunderstood. Genuine compassion is based not on our own projections and expectations, but rather on the rights of the other: irrespective of whether another person is a close friend or an enemy, as long as that person wishes for peace and happiness and wishes to overcome suffering, then on that basis we develop a genuine concern for his or her problems.

This is genuine compassion.

Usually when we are concerned about a close friend, we call this compassion. This is not compassion; it is attachment. Even in marriage, those marriages that last only a short time, do so because of attachment - although it is generally present - but because there is also compassion. Marriages that last only a short time do so because of a lack of compassion; there is only emotional attachment based on projection and expectation. When the only bond between close friends is attachment, then even a minor issue may cause one's projections to change. As soon as our projections change, the attachment disappears, because that attachment was based solely on projection and expectation.

It is possible to have compassion without attachment, and similarly, to have anger without hatred. Therefore we need to clarify the distinctions between compassion and attachment, and between anger and hatred. Such clarity is useful in our daily life and in our efforts toward world peace. I consider these to be basic spiritual values for the happiness of all human beings, regardless of whether one is a believer or a nonbeliever.