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India is a truly secular nation, says Dalai Lama



Dalai Lama at the International Buddhist conclave in Rajgir on Friday

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Rajgir: Buddhist spiritual leader the Dalai Lama called India a truly secular country where every religious group lives in peace without fear. He said India should take the lead for global peace and harmony. While inaugurating the three-day International Buddhist Conclave (IBC) with Union minister of state for tourism and culture Dr Mahesh Sharma at Rajgir's international convention centre on Friday, the Dalai Lama called himself the 'son of India'.

"India preached non-violence for over 2,000 years and it is the only country where people of all faiths live in harmony and without fear," he said and added, "I have been living in this country for the past 58 years and call myself the son of India". On his association with Nalanda, he said, "All my knowledge comes from the Nalanda thoughts, The Tripitaka-Pali Canon, physically and mentally."

On intercaste or interfaith conflicts, he said, "Despite philosophical differences, all religions preach peace and harmony, but the modern day education, which is based on consumerism, has made people devoid of love, affection, friendship and trust. The solution lies in controlling surge of emotion taught in great Indian traditional system of education which teaches tolerance, forgiveness and contentment."

The exiled Tibetan spiritual leader said when he was in Tibet, his thoughts were confined to Tibet only. But, during his stay in India, his thoughts got broadened or globalized.

"Buddha cannot remove sufferings or the cause of sufferings. He only shows the path to control destructive emotions through meditation — Vipassana," he said and added, "Buddha Dharma is relevant in the field of science. So, we say, Buddhism is relevant in the 21st century."

The Union minister, who is also chancellor of Nav Nalanda Mahavihara (NNM), the co-sponsor of the event, praised the Dalai Lama not only for promoting Buddhist values but also for his contribution to world peace. He also assured the NNM to extend every possible cooperation it required for its growth and development.

NNM vice-chancellor M.L. Srivastava said, "Buddhism mitigated the cause of conflicts and promote interfaith harmony, globally." He said the NNM was founded for the promotion of Pali which contributed a lot in understanding Buddhism since its inception in 1961.

Union secretary of culture department, N K Sinha, welcomed the guests and scholars from 30 countries.

The Dalai Lama also unveiled the new version of Tripitaka or Pali Canon and declared open the Buddhist Science department at NNM.