



INTERNATIONAL CAMPAIGN FOR TIBET

Richard Gere speaks on the nature of the Tibetan movement and vision of the Dalai Lama

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During his recent visit to India, Richard Gere, who is the chairman of the International Campaign for Tibet, gave this interview to the Indian TV channel NDTV in which he shared his thoughts on the Dalai Lama, Tibet, China, United States, and the international community's approach towards China.

You can watch the [interview here](#). Following is the full transcript provided by [NDTV](#).

Russia is not the biggest problem on this planet, it's China, said Richard Gere

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Vocal activist for Tibet and a close friend of the Dalai Lama, actor Richard Gere spoke exclusively to NDTV on what he says is China's threat to the world. The head of the International campaign for Tibet said the US had been naive when it comes to the China threat and warned India over how China will penetrate borders and its plans for economic take-over of countries, citing the Sri Lanka crisis.

NDTV: Hello and welcome to the NDTV Dialogues, a conversation of ideas. Today we have a very special guest. He is somebody who's one of the most active international voices for the Tibetan cause. He's a philanthropist. And of course, he's also an actor. Joining me is Richard Gere. Mr Gere, thank you for being on the Dialogues.

Richard Gere: Thank you. Thank you for having me.

NDTV: How would you describe yourself? I've taken so many different facets of your life. How would you describe yourself to...

Richard Gere: I am really terrible at that. Right now, I'm a Dad more than...

NDTV: That's the most difficult job.

Richard Gere: No, I just brought my 22-year-old son, my first son to India for the first time. And we went immediately to Dharamshala and had kind of an extraordinary visit there. But I'm a dad. That's really what I am now.

NDTV: And what, because you, actually your involvement with the Tibetan cause, with Buddhism began, I think, almost more than 30 years ago in the 1970s. So, what is it like for you bringing your son

to his first meeting with His Holiness and his teachings? Did it take you back to the time when you first became involved in this?

Richard Gere: Well, of course, I haven't aged.

NDTV: Of course.

Richard Gere: I have so many friends from that time, its 40 years ago, was the first time I was in Dharamshala. And I was a highly romantic, young man of 30ish. When I came there, and I suppose I was looking for a magical moment of enlightenment. And I found something better. I found a teacher. So, and I found a culture that I fell in love with, and I felt was important to me. But it's important to the world, important to the universe, what the Tibetans have been able to achieve in promoting this ideal of a Bodhisattva, and a sense of universal responsibility. And, of course, His Holiness, the Dalai Lama is the spokesperson extraordinaire for this incredibly open and profound vision that that we are not separate from each other.

NDTV: You've actually you've just been in Dharamshala, as you said for His Holiness' eighty-seventh birthday as well. So that's really a landmark occasion. And the Prime Minister's well called up to wish him and greet him on his birthday. And of course, there was immediately a reaction from China saying the Dalai Lama as a separatist. That's one of the polite words is often called the reverse.

Richard Gere: It's ridiculous.

NDTV: They have called him a devil as well.

Richard Gere: Of course they do. But a wolf and a vampire, and that's kind of a demon. It's insane.

NDTV: And for India, we've always seen him as an extremely honoured and special guest. How do you think that whole balance plays out with India, China, and of course, the Dalai Lama being here as an honoured guest and us in a sense hosting the Tibetan government in exile as well?

Richard Gere: Well, let me go back a little bit to what you have said. I think clearly, China still is deeply insecure. And that's why they behave the way they behave. Their surveillance budget is bigger than anyone's military budget. You only do that when you're deeply insecure about what your people are thinking and what they're writing, what their pain is. The Dalai Lama has proven himself to be a completely truthful, honest and authentic person. I remember one time he stuck out his tongue and he said, my tongue, said this tongue has never lied. And I doubt if there's anyone here who could say that. I certainly couldn't. But I believe it from him. So here you have the most responsible person, certainly one of them on the planet, who has no personal power, has no money, has no economy behind him. He has no guns, he has nothing. But still, the Communist Party in China gets crazy about it. The man who's only spoken about peace and non-violence, and dialogue, everything should be resolved through dialogue and human beings talking to each other.

I remember he said, we were talking in the old days about the Soviet Union, I think it was when there's the US and the Soviet Union in a competitive and sometimes quite violent confrontation. And he said, you know, things can be much simpler, but it has to be human. I said, why don't we have a situation where the leaders of the US and Soviet Union, they go off with their families to an island for two weeks every year, and they cook for each other, and they wash dishes together? And they talk about

their kids. And I think that's the beginning of how conflicts get resolved in a human way. With real wisdom and compassion.

NDTV: I'd like to see then President Trump and President Putin do that.

Richard Gere: But I don't know if I'd want to be on that island.

NDTV: Exactly. No, but just because I watched your testimony you gave to the US Senate, and two years ago as head of the International Campaign for Tibet. And you made the point that successive US administrations have been quite naive when it comes to assessing China's expansionist plans, China's moves to actually penetrate markets, not just the US, but perhaps, but across the world.

Richard Gere: Sure.

NDTV: Do you see that unfolding even more, I mean, we've seen it in India with clashes on our borders...

Richard Gere: There's not an office that I have gone into, any in the US Senate, the Congress or State Department anywhere, that the first thing they say is we have to do something about China. First thing, everyone knows it's not Russia, Russia is not the biggest problem on this planet. It's China. I think there was a very naive period starting in the 1990s and maybe before that, certainly with Nixon, and Kissinger going to China. But the thought was if you can raise a large, middle class and educated middle class in China, that naturally, they're going to become a democracy and responsible law abiding and international citizens. Well, it didn't happen. The Chinese Communist Party's too clever for that. The resources they have are too vast for that. Now, if you do that naivete along with the economic promise that people could make billions and billions of dollars there, there's a certain hallucination that has taken over the world, that we can't cross the Chinese we need them too badly. Well, we know now we don't need them too badly. What we need are good citizens. We need citizens of the world that we can trust, who understand the rule of law, who understand human rights.

NDTV: And I mean, I think at the time of COVID, even more, when we saw the authoritarian clamp down on citizens' rights in China, we never knew the real information on how, what happened with the COVID virus. So, the implications for the world I think, which are often ignored by other countries, is...

Richard Gere: Greed, you know, or basic ignorance and greed, are a very toxic combination. And that has created this hallucination. Now, it's a completely authoritarian country of course, and being one they can be monolithic in this message that they put out, over and over and over again. Democracies change. We have new Presidents. We have new Prime Ministers. They have a law now that he's going to be lifetime Emperor of China. So, you're going to have this constant for decades, the same mantra of foolishness. The mantra that they've had from the beginning, that Tibet, since antiquity, has been part of China. It's completely ridiculous. We just had hearings in the US Congress about this. Experts from around the world, including China, came and said, of course, this is not true. China itself didn't really emerge until the present as a cohesive place. That the dynamics in Asia have shifted over 1000s of years from suddenly the Mongolians, but even Tibetans controlled most of Asia all the way to the Caspian Sea for hundreds of years. But it doesn't matter. This constant mantra of we are strong from the Chinese side, we have owned Asia forever, Tibetans have always been controlled by the Chinese. And they're doing this with the Uyghurs. Now, interesting thing about the Uyghurs is that the policies that we see now, and clearly have been brought out in news reports, I'm sure you've done some here, yes, in NDTV, those were perfected in Tibet.

NDTV: No, and I think the point you make what greed is, is really relevant at this point, because countries across the world ignore that to do business with China. And you faced the impact of that as well. Whether it's you being blacklisted in China, whether you can make a movie with you, because of what the China markets are, the impact on China markets would be, you just didn't care about that, even when you did very much...

Richard Gere: No, I don't care about that. Well, first of all, I mean, it's more complicated now. China has been so effective that people self-edit now. Chinese don't have to say, don't hire Richard Gere, or don't do this or don't do that. People for fear, do their bidding without even being told anymore. But in my case, I don't really care because I don't make the kind of movies that they show there anyhow. I don't do the big superhero movies, which is what they want to see.

NDTV: No Marvel movies, Richard Gere as a captain?

Richard Gere: I think I was asked to do one many years ago. And I was, it was kind of the wise old man in the picture. I really had no interest in being the wise old man and in a Marvel movie.

NDTV: No, but just because I just wanted to ask also what's happening right now in our region, because we've seen, of course, what happened in the clashes on India's borders with China. And also, because...

Richard Gere: Well, that's going to continue. They're going to keep penetrating borders like they have in Bhutan. They're certainly doing in Nepal, all across your border from Arunachal to Ladakh. They're going to be messing with the borders and places that he says to, you know, we don't have any treaties here, that we haven't decided where the borders are, you know, when we have lots of weapons, we have a lot of money. And...

NDTV: I think they've, and I think India also waking up to its outreach, again to His Holiness, because India also often goes too hot and cold in terms of how much they look at what China calls as provocation. But India is now taking a very different stance, but the impact of the neighbourhood, you've seen what's happening in Sri Lanka, because of the China economic debt, the One Belt, One Road initiative, do you think we've realized enough for this region's, realized enough what China's plans are for domination of here?

Richard Gere: Plans are very clear. They've been clear for many decades. They have a 100-year plan that came out in the 1980s. They're about 50 years ahead of that plan already. They told the world what they were going to do. And they've been very, very clever about it. They're patient. They don't have to get involved in a war. They get involved in economies. What they did in Sri Lanka, what they're doing in the Stan countries in Asia, what they're doing in Mongolia. I mean, they don't have to fire a gun. They just own the countries through the economies, they lend money and the horrible thing that happened in Sri Lanka, you know, lending money there that they had to give him the port. So now China owns the port in Sri Lanka. They've done the same thing in Italy. They have a deal now to basically own a port in Italy. Crazy.

NDTV: Why do you think people aren't listening? Why do you think the world isn't standing up? In democracies often, you talk about the 100-year plan, it's a five-year plan till the next re-election comes up. How do you think we can actually change your look at this, the Dalai Lama's voice is understood as one man? But, how can we actually look at this more concretely?

Richard Gere: Well Dalai Lama is not looking for conflict, he's looking for everyone getting together. And he says this can be a one world where we are responsible with each other. But to do that, you have to, you have to embrace every one of your brother and sister and Western countries have not been graded that, we've exploited people all over the world since the beginning. And there will come a time when we will be exploited. And I hope it isn't the Chinese because it's not going to be fun for anybody. But I think we have to, to look at history, I think we have to look at ourselves. We can't allow this kind of poverty that exists all over the world. Now, you're a developing country here and very developed a lot in 40 years since I first came here. Certainly, India has changed enormously. But you still have extraordinary poverty in this country, the same time you have multi-100-billion-dollar people here. One would expect that this sense of responsibility and fair play would kick in, no matter what your religion is, it doesn't matter, we all know respond to basic goodness, all of us. And the basic goodness is, we can help each other everywhere. When the planet rises to a certain level of genuine love and compassion and concern, most of the problems that we're talking about, we talked about before the camera was on, they go away. They're irrelevant at that point. Because we are genuinely in, you know, loving relationship with each other, as people, as individuals and families and villages and countries and the whole planet. But, you know, Gandhi spoke about this constantly, it starts small, these things start small, but they have to be genuine. And then they can become bigger.

NDTV: One of the most ironic things, perhaps, is the Communist Party of China says that they want to choose who the next Dalai Lama will be.

Richard Gere: I know. I saw one of the foreign representatives and it was so pathetic, and he was reacting to the Dalai Lama, who is an extraordinarily highly developed yogi. And part of his practice every day, is to in fact go through the process of dying. And that's part of the tantric practice that he does. And it's amazing thing, how that transforms your mind. The Dalai Lama gets up at three o'clock every morning, to essentially practice how he's going to die. And he says, I'm not going to be born in a Chinese controlled area. This poor gentleman from the Communist Party says it's not up to the Dalai Lama to decide where he's born. It's up to the Communist Party, which is an atheist organization. So, it's laughable. It's laughable. It's pathetic.

NDTV: Do you, do you ever and in fact, I asked His Holiness this once, do you ever lose hope? Because, do you think that you work with a development cause for 40 years, you've seen besides His Holiness, the monks, the many Tibetans who live here have never seen their country, who've been born in India, and have never seen their land, the second generation? Do you ever think what will happen to the Tibetan cause after His Holiness? How will this actually go on?

Richard Gere: Well, everyone thinks about that. I mean, he's such a dominant force. And there's, I mean, I think we all kind of look to the side lines and say, who could ever follow? And of course, no one could ever follow. I gave a speech in Dharamshala, a few days ago, on the birthday of His Holiness, the 87th birthday. And I said, look, the Dalai Lama has been carrying all of us for 87 years. I think it's time for us to carry ourselves and marry, and maybe, maybe carry him as well. And I think we all have to step up. You know, we, we can do this. The Tibetans are probably the most successful refugee community in the history of the world.

NDTV: Yes.

Richard Gere: And they've maintained themselves in the extraordinary experiment of being Tibetan. They, they took these teachings seriously, about being universally responsible, and creating people

who are universally responsible. Their resources went into that. They didn't build factories, they built people.

NDTV: And His Holiness, of course, made the Buddha's cause and it's a national one. When he came first as a young man, when he came to India, he spoke at the UN, and he made it an international cause. But of course, Hollywood's and actors like yourself made it trendy or hip at one point. Do you think that when people describe Buddhism as a fad or something which is seen as cool to do because Richard Gere is doing it, what would you say to people like that?

Richard Gere: Oh, I don't know, I think people try things. Experiment. I think this movement, the Tibetan movement, which, to me is much larger than Tibet, it's larger than the Dalai Lama, the Dalai Lama wants it to be larger than Tibet. It's, it's a, it's a universal moment of singing songs of peace and possibility, of longing. And I think this Tibetan message, this Tibetan story is one that informs our hearts, to the extent that we can change and get bigger and more responsible and more compassionate and, and more generous with our resources and our money, more generous with our skills, and our capacities, more generous in our institutions to include everyone. This can happen. And I know people are probably drawn to His Holiness, because they feel it. You've seen His Holiness many times, you feel it, that this is genuine.

I remember talking to someone, it was a book in a library over in Dharamshala. So, there was a book and it was called The Good Heart. And the Dalai Lama had done a series of seminars in the Christian church outside of London. And he was asked to teach on Jesus Christ and the words of Jesus Christ. And I was making a movie there that I was able on that weekend to go and see these teachings and I was backstage with His Holiness before he went on. And, of course, it was a certain tension there because in Christianity, there's a creator God, a creator deity that created the world. And in Buddhism, there's no Creator. The mind itself is the creator, we create ourselves and we can create our futures just as well, we're responsible. There's no one to complain to, other than ourselves. But His Holiness started teaching and the words of Jesus Christ that I grew up with, it's like I never heard them before. Because it was coming from someone who had it, who really authentically and genuinely and completely was, when he said the word love, in the context of love your neighbour, it was like I'd never heard this before. So, when one encounters beings such as this, and you have many extraordinary beings that have come out of Indian culture here, in all the religions of this area, but when you encounter someone genuine, and someone who has, because of their karmic imprints, and what they've done in previous lives, of course, our world shakers, the Dalai Lama grew up in a farm in Amdo, in the middle of nowhere, is now probably the most revered person on the planet.

NDTV: So why would an actor who had in the '70s and when he went on to do movies like, I mean for our generation, of course we grew up on a Pretty Woman and Officer and a Gentleman; why would an actor who had all that, who seemed to have everything that Hollywood, and the world could offer him, what were you looking for? When, why would you become a Buddhist or follow those teachings? How would you reconcile being called the sexiest man alive, I mean, with being a simple Buddhist worshipper?

Richard Gere: I wanted to know why I was miserable and everyone else was miserable. Who wanted to know why people suffer? I wanted why things go so wrong? And as you know, it's the first noble truth after the Buddha had, you know, many lifetimes of, of evolutionary work on himself and became the Buddha, the Universal Being. He said quite clearly, I don't know how I could ever explain this to anyone what has happened to me. When I am now a universal consciousness, and all the deities came to him. And all the kings came to him, and they were pleading and weeping and said, please

teach. And he, he worked very hard on how can I do and while he came up with the First, the Four Noble Truths, the First of which is the Truth of Suffering, is that we all live lives that are unfulfilled, that are painful, various degrees of that. But there's a basic kind of frustration and sense of incompleteness that I think we all have. And then he said, well, there are causes for that. There are reasons why we feel that way. And then, you know, there is a way if you remove the causes, you don't have that suffering. And then there's okay, there's a path you can actually follow to get there. But the reality is, we are all in various degrees of suffering. And that's what I was concerned about on my own. But also, as I looked around me, everyone else is suffering.

NDTV: And so as, as we talk today, we just, we talked, also we'll refer to the Ukraine war, but we've got a, we've got a whole younger generation, you said you describe yourself as a dad, we've got a whole younger generation growing up seeing some of the, as I said, their school shootings in the US, conflicts and every country in the world, or where violence like that happens, how do you keep hope and compassion at the centre? And what would you tell? What would you tell your son and many others like him on why there's reason for hope, today with your Buddhist teachings?

Richard Gere: Because ultimately, we all lean towards love, all of us. We all lean towards goodness, even the bad guys, if you look below the surface of their badness. We're all leaning towards love. And that is connection. When we connect, we care, because we see ourselves in the other. You know, we have you know, the Chinese do this with the Tibetans, and they do with the Uyghurs and they do with the Hong Kongers and, and the Russians are doing it with the Ukrainians, are supposed to be their brothers and sisters, demonizing them, now it's some crazy thing about Nazis. The bad guys are always finding a way to create the other, to demonize the other, your problems are because of them. You obviously have it here in India as well.

NDTV: When I mean, the advantage, perhaps of being Richard Gere, being known once as the sexiest man alive etc. Is that when you speak?

Richard Gere: Yes, I'm still not? I'm not the sexiest man? That was a was, why? Didn't you say the sexiest man alive?

NDTV: But when you speak, people listen. And you voice strong political opinions as well. What would you tell leaders like ex-President Trump, President Xi, President Putin, what would you say to them today, especially after having been with the His Holiness for this time right now?

Richard Gere: I don't know what you do with someone like Trump, because he's obviously such a damaged, emotionally and psychologically damaged person? That he needs a lot of help. A lot of help.

NDTV: You should take him to Dharamshala.

Richard Gere: Think he would go, no. I just want to...

NDTV: Anyone right?

Richard Gere: Now, it's pathetic. I mean, I feel great pity for someone like that. He's created karmically. He's creating such a negative future for himself. Again, I think I think that how much money do you need? How much power do you need? Putin is clearly a multi, multi, multi billionaire. And he's, he's a Neo Czar at the moment. You know, he's going to be the lifetime President, Prime Minister,

however he manages it, of Russia as long as he wants to be. But what's the legacy you want? The legacy is one of pain and suffering and violence and repression. Or have you elevated your people from the real place in their hearts? Have you elevated them, have you created more light, instead of darkness? And the ones you mentioned, you know, their concerns are so tight around themselves, they can't really see very far, that their actions are causing such an attitude. Imagine, I mean, to what this war in Ukraine, destroying a country, literally destroyed to rubble. Women and children, you know, hospitals, schools, playgrounds, it's insane. And the Russian people don't even know about, they don't have an NDTV that is showing the truth to them, and gives a counter point of view. You think the Chinese get a real story about Xinjiang, or about Tibet, or about Hong Kong, or Taiwan? Of course not.

But let me say one more thing. We were talking about all those horrible things without filming it, how dark things are. I was talking to one of my teachers just yesterday actually, and he said, look this is the way it works, when there's so much goodness happening and a basic transcendence is really happening, real wisdom is starting to emerge, real wisdom is starting to come up, universal wisdom is starting to come up and the balance is going in the right direction. You are actually magnetising lots of negative forces. So, in some sense this kind of violence in the US schools, mass shooters, what we see in Ukraine, craziness of how the Communist Party is destroying people, their own people as well as the Tibetans, as well as everyone else they touch, it's an indication that the light is really emerging and we are seeing this kind of universal conflicts that are going to be happening on a lot larger levels. Some of them appear quite mysterious, simple people like me can't really see, but they are happening.

NDTV: I think the larger message is of hope that we should end this interview on.

Richard Gere: I have a lot of hope.

NDTV: Richard Gere thank you for being on the NDTV Dialogues, thank you.



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