

Transcript of Dame Hermione Lee's speech at Wolfson College, University of Oxford.

It's a great honour and pleasure for Wolfson to welcome Your Holiness to the College for the second time, and to be able to mark your relation to our College with our highest honour.

We have very particular local reasons for our gratitude to you over some years now. You and your charitable organisation 'Live to Love', have supported one of our students, Joshua Daugherty, in his MPhil in Tibetan and Himalayan Studies, who would otherwise not have been able to do his work here. Student support from benefactors such as yourself is of the utmost importance to our work here and we appreciate it deeply.

You have made welcome our wonderful professor of Tibetan and Himalayan Studies, Ulrike Roesler - who has organised this week's event - at your monastery in Ladakh and we have hosted here one of your nuns working on historic preservation in Ladakh.

We are also very excited at the possibility of further collaborations and a wider relationship with you, which I know have been under discussion during your visit.

For us, to be able to receive you and honour you here is a very momentous occasion. As the world knows, you are a spiritual leader of great inspiration to a very large number of people. As Ulrike said earlier, your work in education, in charity, in environmental protection, in medical aid and emergency relief, in abbeys' cultural heritage, is of great benefit to the world at large, as well as specific places such as Nepal and Ladakh, where your main activities are based.

The world is a better place for your foundation of abbeys and nunneries, your spiritual eco pilgrimages, your mass cycling initiatives, your tree plantings, your writings and your empowerment and championing of women's rights, especially with your legendary Kung Fu Nuns. As the first woman president of this college, those aspects of your work are of special significance to me.

You have been widely acclaimed for your great works, including by the United Nations 'Millennium Development Goals Award' and by the President of India's 'Green Hero Award.'

It's a great privilege for us to be able to add from our own institution a mark of our profound respect and admiration, and also of our friendship, by awarding you, to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the College last year, an Honorary Fellowship of Wolfson College. I'd now like to present this to you, along with a small gift of the Wolfson College Colours - which are not unlike your own!

Transcript of His Holiness the Gyalwang Drukpa's speech at Wolfson College, University of Oxford.

I just want to express my gratitude to everyone I mentioned before, but especially the governing body, Dame Hermione Lee and scholars, interns and friends at Wolfson College, University of Oxford - a very good evening to you all.

I am very humbled and honoured to join the impressive list of Honorary Fellows at your prestigious institution. It has been a privilege to work with Wolfson College over the past five or six years, especially in promoting all the diverse cultures of the Himalayas and its history. As you all know, the Himalayas are spread across India, Nepal, Bhutan, Tibet, China - and Pakistan also in today's context - and are the source of some of the world's largest rivers: the Indus River, which cuts through Ladakh and out the other side, the Ganges and the Zangpo Brahmaputra. The Himalayas are also home to some of the world's most ancient and magnificent civilisations. The main different spiritual traditions - shamanism, Hinduism and obviously Buddhism - took root in the Himalayas and spread to the rest of the world. So in that respect I would say the Himalayas is kind of a birthplace of entire religion and spirituality and it is very important, from that point of view, that the Himalayas is something we should not forget. I, myself, claim myself to be a master called Dragon (he laughs, the dragon master!). More than 800 years ago the first Gyalwang Drukpa - I am the 12th Gyalwang Drukpa - so the first Gyalwang Drukpa more than 800 years ago when he came to a place he was thinking about setting up his first settlement to spread his teachings in the village, in that place he found nine dragons and as he walked closer the nine dragons flew up in the sky with a loud clap of thunder and he named the lineage Drukpa. Drukpa in Tibetan, Druk in Tibetan means dragon so actually this means Druk lineage or dragon lineage, so he named this lineage as Drukpa. After many centuries his reincarnations and his students and their reincarnations spread the spiritual legacy to all parts of the Himalayas. For centuries many Buddhist kingdoms in the Himalayas became patrons of the Drukpa lineage. I believe this is what our spiritual lineage is able to contribute to the heritage of the Himalayas and the world. Today when traditions seem to be in conflict with modernisation, we in the Himalayas also struggle to find ways to bridge the differences. Most of our youngsters, who are the leaders of our future generations, have become disillusioned about their own culture and traditions. This is what I was expressing a while ago, that the people, the leaders, the monks, the nuns, even the reincarnations and the master lama, we all seem to be lazy in terms of serving the heritage; the culture of the Himalaya and culture of the lineage and beautiful traditions of different regions of the Himalayas. This is not just one tradition, when we talk about Himalayan tradition, it has many, many, many different traditions, so all these traditions need to be preserved in order to make it complete. So you all have to be working hand-in-hand with the full knowledge of the importance of the Himalayan culture and heritage but unfortunately not many of us could manage to put anything together and therefore I was expressing my gratitude to you guys for putting all the effort and hard work to help us to protect and preserve our culture, heritage, scripts, statues etc. All these things are amazing and very impressive for me. We, naturally, cannot disconnect heritage, culture and tradition from our practical living. Making sense of our Himalayan heritage and making it a living tradition is something we all must strive to achieve, because history has shown that our forefathers' wisdom can create answers to modern day crises. Some people may say that those of us, people like me, who are committed to heritage protection, are old fashioned. Looking at the

conflicts and problems we are facing today in this world, we need history and experience to resolve them and therefore I would like all of you to be passionate about preserving our centuries old traditions. Although I am not a scholar - I usually say I am a really uneducated person, the most uneducated person in the world, especially the most uneducated master in the world - but obviously I would be honoured and proud to be able to continue working with people like you continuously. From the depth of my heart I want to really dedicate my life and my energy to really work with you guys, until I cannot move any more.

So I don't want to take much of your time, just to thank you once again for the Honorary Fellowship and belated congratulations on the 50th Anniversary of Wolfson College.

Thank you.