

For six decades he has led his people, keeping hope alive even when there is no visible sign of success. The Monk shares the secret behind his inexhaustible sense of purpose

This fortnight, I have the 14th Dalai Lama, His Holiness, Tenzin Gyatso in the Zen Garden. He was recognised at the age of two as the reincarnation of the 13th Dalai Lama. At six, he began the traditional education of a Tibetan Buddhist monk. At 15, he was asked to become the temporal head of his people, and at 20 he went to Beijing to attempt peace talks with Chairman Mao Tse Tung before fleeing to India where he established the Tibetan government in exile. Today, though, the Dalai Lama symbolises not just the Tibetan peoples' right to self-determination, but the universal right to freedom and human dignity. Despite his countless religious and political engagements, the 1989 winner of the Nobel Peace Prize agreed to meet with me for an unhurried conversation in Delhi.

SB: "Your Holiness, what would Buddha tell the world of business if he were in our midst today?"

The Dalai Lama laughs at the idea. He is like an amused second grader who thinks every adult question is a fruitless exercise. But in the next moment, the Monk takes over. "Perhaps one thing," he says. "Businesses must pursue their activities with humanity. I think Buddha may insist that modern business be more altruistic and be truthful. With truthfulness and honesty, you can be transparent. Transparency is very important to build trust.

"Since the global economic crisis happened, I found it rather difficult to understand when some people said that the market-oriented economy is something beyond human control. The market-oriented economy is itself a human creation.

So I feel it is a contradiction when people say our own creation is beyond our control! So, out of curiosity I asked a friend what was going on. He told me that the cause of the crisis is too much greed. And then, there is speculation. Without knowing the nature of things, people go ahead and create rumours. So, I feel that at the core of the present economic crisis, is the issue of honesty. Buddha would say, if

there is some danger or failure looming, make it clear. Be honest."

SB: "What would you say to the leaders in today's world of business?"

DL: "To be an effective business leader, or for that matter to be a leader in any field, the essential thing is to build trust. Without trust, friendship and genuine respect are impossible. Effective human endeavour needs many people's collabora-

tion. And that requires trust. Remember, we are social animals. The basis of our survival and happiness is in trust and the sharing of each others' problems. Leaders in business also must see everything more holistically. A lot of problems arise due to our non-holistic view."

SB: "A lot of young people get caught up in their own success and lose affection for work. What would you say to them?"

DL: "The whole education system is oriented towards material values, not spiritual values and secular ethics. So, the younger generation can think only about money. And that leads to rapid lack of motivation and patience. We must convey to young people that all economic progress is for the development of a nation and ultimately for humanity at large."

The Dalai Lama had turned 74 the day before our meeting. The Monk has devoted his entire life to the cause of Tibet; it has been six decades of struggle with no

sign of hope in the near future. The land that was home to millions of his displaced countrymen has no geo-political centrality that can stir the democracies of the world into action against the aggressor. So what keeps him going? How does he hold out hope to the millions who look up to him?

SB: "Your Holiness, how do you feed your own soul to keep the idea of Tibet alive? Leaders in business are also required to promote ideas but faced with the smallest adversity, we simply give up."

"If I am involved in the business field, I may also give up," he says with a mischievous glint in his eyes.

Then the Monk returns. "I think people carrying on with their work just for money, name or out of plain curiosity have a greater chance of giving up when faced with a small adversity. If a scientist is at work for the benefit of humanity, then he will not give up. So we need a larger sense of purpose to be able to draw from a larger

source of inner strength."

The purpose determines the power.

I must now leave him to his work. Before going, I introduce Neelima Mahajan-Bansal of *Forbes India* who is with me, carrying a few back issues of the magazine for him. He flips through the pages of one and is amused by the picture of the Vodafone pug in the jingle tunes story. He declares that the dog is probably rather bored. We all laugh. And then he asks Neelima a very CEO-like question: "What is the circulation figure of the magazine?"

This is a man who believes, "As long as space will exist and there will be need to alleviate the suffering of living things, may I be around, may I be useful." I am baffled that this profoundly spiritual man can pause to poke fun at the picture of a pug and also to seek the circulation figure of a capitalist magazine.

We embrace each other in joy and then I leave him to his design. ■

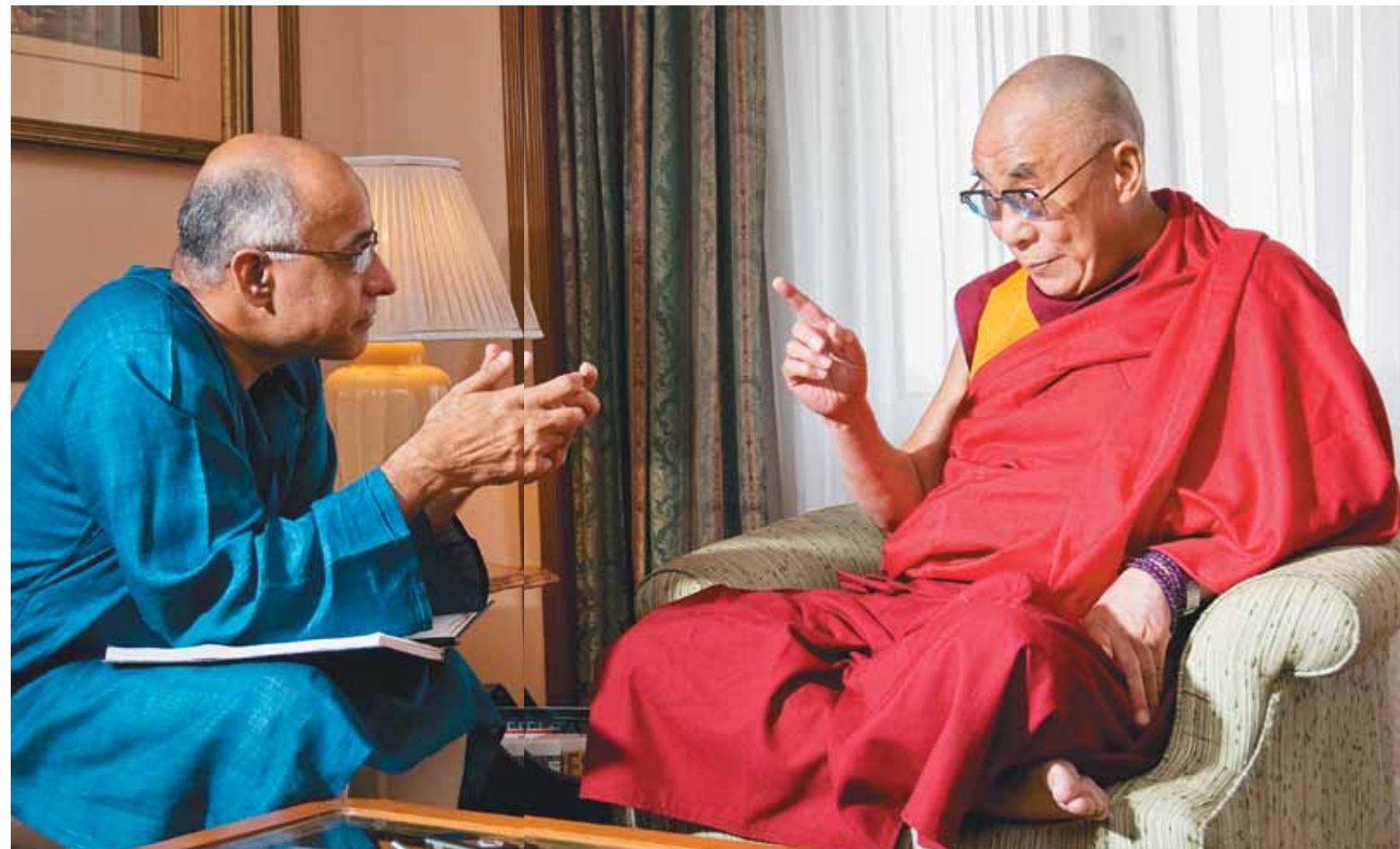
CEO OF THE SOUL

NAME
Subroto Bagchi

PROFILE
Co-founder & Gardener, MindTree Ltd., best-selling author

FORBES INDIA BRIEF
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NAME
the 14th Dalai Lama, His Holiness, Tenzin Gyatso

PROFILE
Head of the Tibetan government-in-exile; winner of the Nobel Peace Prize in 1989

LEADERSHIP, THE MONK'S WAY:

- Businesses must pursue their activities with humanity, honesty and transparency.
- To be a leader in any field, the essential thing is to build trust. Effective human endeavour needs many people's collaboration. And that requires trust.
- The purpose determines the power to persevere.