

## Lecture 63: Breaking Through into Buddhahood

Mr Chairman and friends

As I think most of you know by this time, there are quite a number of different ways of beginning a lecture. One can of course plunge straight into the subject, as it were head foremost, or one can alternatively approach it gradually, work ones way into it little by little, usually with the help of an introduction, sometimes in fact a very long introduction. Again one can begin ones lecture by asking a question. According to the books on the subject this always stimulates attention; and one can also start by telling a story or a little anecdote; or again one can even begin ones lecture by describing the different ways of beginning a lecture.

Now today I rather wanted to adopt the first method. Today I rather wanted to plunge straight into the subject. I wanted as it were to 'break through' into *Breaking Through into Buddhahood*. And undoubtedly this is or this would have been the most appropriate way of beginning today. But this was not possible because today is a special occasion. As you've heard today we are celebrating the second anniversary of our movement including, or as well as, the first anniversary of the Order — the Western Buddhist Order. And this lecture doesn't stand by itself, doesn't stand alone; it's part and parcel of this celebration.

So it is perhaps only fitting, it is only proper that I should first of all say just a few words about our movement itself. There's a great deal that could be said, there's a great deal perhaps that will be said on other occasions, but this afternoon I want to say just one thing. And that one thing is this: That our movement itself represents on its own level a breakthrough. Not of course a breakthrough into Buddhahood — this would be claiming far too much — but certainly a breakthrough into Buddhism, real Buddhism, so far as this country is concerned.

There were of course before us other Buddhist organizations, some of which in fact still survive. You may be interested to hear that the oldest surviving Buddhist organization in this country is the Shropshire Buddhist Society, which was founded in 1923 - which is quite a long time ago, even before I was born. When I last heard of it, when I was in that part of the country, it had then dwindled down to one member, who was rather active — not to say militant — and was still keeping the flag flying at the age of seventy plus. There are of course in the country other Buddhist organizations too. All of these have played their part in the development of Buddhism in this country. They've all helped in one way and another to make Buddhism better known than it was before they started their activities.

But nevertheless, we may say that all of these different organizations suffered from certain limitations, suffered perhaps inevitably from certain limitations. They studied Buddhism, they read the scriptures, they tried to penetrate the philosophy, follow the course of the history of Buddhism, acquainted themselves with the different sects, they even to some extent tried to practice Buddhism, but the limitation consisted in this: That even though they tried to practice Buddhism, even though they tried to follow the Buddha's teaching, they did so only to the extent that it did not interfere with the living of a respectable, usually rather middle class, conventional, English lifestyle. In other words in those days one, as it were prided oneself, even if one was a Buddhist, on being just like everybody else. One held the same kind of job, one lived in the same kind of house, ate the same kind of food, saw the same kind of films and more recently of course, one watched the same kind of television programme as everybody

else. The only difference was that one was a Buddhist. That was the only difference, or rather the only difference was that instead of going to church on Sundays you went to a Buddhist meeting, if not on a Sunday then on some other day of the week. And very often in those days one tried to keep the fact that one was a Buddhist secret. It was a sort of skeleton in ones cupboard that one was a Buddhist, and even ones best friends did not know. I remember up in the midlands somewhere, one woman telling me with evident satisfaction that she'd worked in the same firm, with the same people for some twelve years, and she said, 'not one of them knows I'm a Buddhist.' And she seemed quite proud of this fact, that not one of them had found out that she was a Buddhist.

But all this is now changing, we may say. In fact, this has already changed to a very great extent, and it is in this change, in the fact of this change, that our breakthrough consists. More and more people realize that in the words of William James, 'A difference must *make* a difference.' A difference cannot be just theoretical. If there's a real difference one sees it working itself out in actual life, in actual practice, concretely. So more and more people do realize, nowadays, that one cannot keep Buddhism in a compartment, in a compartment separate from the rest of ones life. More and more people now begin to see and to feel and to realize that it's not enough just to understand Buddhism, not enough just to have a theoretical grasp of it, to know it intellectually, theoretically.

More and more people now understand that the Buddha's teaching, little by little should transform ones whole existence, individual and collective. That if one is a Buddhist, if one understands Buddhism, if one is trying to put it into practice, then it should affect every aspect of ones life. It should affect the kind of work that one does, how one is employed, how one earns money, how one does one's work, the way in which one does it. It should affect also the way in which one makes use of ones leisure time. If one is a Buddhist, if one accepts the principles of Buddhism, it should affect ones attitude towards such major aspects of human life as, for instance, marriage; the family; sex; social life and so on, and if one happens to be say a writer or an artist then it should deeply influence ones creative work, and ones creative output, not as it were from the outside, but deeply from within. One might even go so far as to say that the fact that one is a Buddhist, the fact that one accepts certain principles, certain spiritual ideals, should show itself even in the kind of food that one eats and the way in which one eats it, even in the kind of clothes that one wears. If one wanted to venture a little epigram, one might say that 'Buddhism and beef steaks do not go together.'

Above all we may say, Buddhism should influence our relationships with other human beings, with one another. Reference has been made already to the last retreat, the Easter retreat, and I think one might say that this was one of the most happy aspects of that very happy retreat, that people found that in the right sort of environment, in the right sort of atmosphere, with the right sort of basis, their human relationships did develop, did blossom in fact, in a very different way from that in which they usually do develop within a more conventional context.

So all this means, all this signifies the fact that Buddhism properly understood, deeply understood, thoroughly applied, applied amply, extensively, is in a word *revolutionary*. It is revolutionary that is to say, within the context of the established order, and it's in the realization of this fact that our breakthrough consists, in the realization of the fact that Buddhism has to transform every aspect of our lives. Not just be something that we theoretically understand, not be just a little hobby with which we occupy ourselves once or twice a week, or once or twice a month, but the transforming agent, the transforming

influence, the catalyst if you like, of our lives. And therefore I thought it would be appropriate if today, on the occasion of our second anniversary, we examined the whole concept of breaking through; not just breaking through into Buddhism, into real Buddhism, but even going so far as to consider breaking through into Buddhahood itself.

Now we usually think of the spiritual life in terms of growth, in terms of progress, development, evolution - something slow, steady, proceeding by regular continuous steps. And this is a perfectly valid, in fact a very good, a very helpful way of thinking and speaking of the spiritual life; this gradual development, this gradual evolution. But we can think of it also in another way; we can think of the spiritual life, of spiritual experience in terms of breaking through, and there are certain advantages of thinking, or certain advantages *in* thinking of the spiritual life, of spiritual experience in this way.

If we think in terms of breaking through, or if you like 'bursting through', it makes it clear that the spiritual life consists in part at least, or from one point of view at least, in an abrupt transition from one level or one dimension of experience or one mode of being if you like, to another. It draws attention to the fact that the spiritual life involves not just effort — we're all familiar with that idea — but even we may say, 'violence'. This isn't a very popular idea, a very popular conception, that the spiritual life involves violence, but involve violence it does; not of course violence to others, but violence even to oneself, or to certain aspects of oneself, certain aspects of oneself which constitute obstacles which need to be overcome.

We all come up against these obstacles, these very difficult, obstinate aspects of ourselves which stand in the way of our own higher development and evolution, and sometimes they're very very intractable indeed, and we find that they can't be charmed away by any sort of 'Sirens' song', and it doesn't seem possible to remove them, to dismantle them bit by bit. There they are in all their intractable tangibility, there they are like great rocks and great boulders blocking our path, so sometimes we have just to break through, sometimes we just have to burst through, with the help of a sort of charge of spiritual dynamite regardless of consequences — it can't always be smooth, it can't always be easy, it can't always be gradual. Sometimes it has to be violent and abrupt and if you like even dramatic, and as I say, regardless of consequences. We have to break through, we have to burst through. We may say that the average spiritual life consists of periods of fairly steady progress, just a little bit at a time, you know, just very slow, just very imperceptible, from month to month and year to year. You look back after say three or four years, you think 'Yes, maybe I made a bit of progress — I'm not quite so bad tempered as I was, I'm just a wee bit more mindful.' So periods of fairly steady progress, perhaps even apparent stagnation, separated by more or less violent and dramatic breakthroughs. This is the picture as it were, this is the graph as it were, of the average vigorous spiritual life. A period of very slow progress then a breakthrough, to another higher level, then slow steady progress, breakthrough. Slow steady progress, breakthrough. This is the average picture.

So, this evening we're concerned with the aspect of breakthrough. Now we're going to discuss the subject under three main headings. First of all; **What one breaks through**. Secondly; **How one breaks through**, and thirdly; **Where and When one breaks through**. And these headings are not mutually exclusive, and there will be as we deal with them, quite a bit of overlapping.

So first of all, **What one breaks through:**

Well what does one have to break through? In principle one has to break through everything which is mundane, everything which is conditioned, everything which is, as it were, of this world, everything which is part and parcel of the samsara, everything which represents a segment or a spoke or an aspect of the Wheel of Life. One has to break through, one has to burst through all this.

But this, though true, is too general. The mundane, the conditioned, the samsara, has so many different aspects, and these different aspects of the samsara are like so many thick, so many impenetrable veils, like so many barriers, like so many roadblocks, like so many, as I said, great boulders piled high in our path, and all of these have to be broken through. And this evening I'm going to discuss just four of the more important blockages; four of the more important aspects of the conditioned, of the mundane, which have to be broken through if Buddhahood is to be attained. First of all, negative emotions. Secondly, psychological conditionings. Thirdly, rational thinking. Fourthly, time sense. All of these have to be broken through if we are to get anywhere near Buddhahood.

First of all: *Negative Emotions*

Now, more than once in the past we've had occasion to speak about these, especially in their verbal manifestations. So what are they? In their primary form the negative emotions are three in number. There's craving, in the sense of neurotic desire. There's hatred and there's fear. These are the three primary forms of the negative emotions. But there are very many secondary and tertiary forms: There's anxiety — a sort of diffused fear. There's insecurity, there's jealousy, there's self-pity, guilt, remorse, contempt, conceit, envy, depression, pessimism, gloom, alarm, always be smooth, it can't always be easy, it can't always be gradual. Sometimes it has to be violent and abrupt and if you like even dramatic, and as I say, regardless of consequences. We have to break through, we have to burst through. We may say that the average spiritual life consists of periods of fairly steady progress, just a little bit at a time, you know, just very slow, just very imperceptible, from month to month and year to year. You look back after say three or four years, you think 'Yes, maybe I made a bit of progress — I'm not quite so bad tempered as I was, I'm just a wee bit more mindful.' So periods of fairly steady progress, perhaps even apparent stagnation, separated by more or less violent and dramatic breakthroughs. This is the picture as it were, this is the graph as it were, of the average vigorous spiritual life. A period of very slow progress then a breakthrough, to another higher level, then slow steady progress, breakthrough. Slow steady progress, breakthrough. This is the average picture.

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So I'm not going to say very much about them at all, but they certainly have certain characteristics in common as we've seen on other occasions. All these negative emotions represent leakages, drainages of emotional energy. When we indulge in negative emotions, whether in their primary, their secondary, their tertiary forms, energy, psychical energy even spiritual energy is draining away from us in all directions all the time, and indulgence in the negative emotions therefore weakens us. And this causes us to withdraw into ourselves — if you haven't got much energy you don't want to give out. If you're weaker, if you've lost energy, you tend to withdraw into yourself, to contract.

So the negative emotions cause us to contract into what we may describe as a cold, hard, tight knot of separative selfhood. This is the effect of indulging constantly, persistently in negative emotions. And unfortunately we may say that the negative emotions are extremely widespread. They're practically all-pervasive, and it seems to be the special function of several ubiquitous agencies to intensify the negative emotions as much as possible. Take, for instance, the daily newspaper. You see many newspapers specializing in the sensational, the horrible, the shocking. If there's a good juicy murder this is just what they love to get hold of, and they gloat over it page after page. In this way negative emotions are stimulated. And then there's the advertising industry; a very large, a very important, a very powerful industry. It's special function seems to be to stimulate neurotic craving, to multiply people's wants, not to meet their needs, but to multiply their wants. And then we find that most of the people that we meet,

outside of course of our own movement I hope, are negative rather than positive in their emotional attitudes and their emotional responses. You get from most people a negative rather than a positive feeling, if one moves in ordinary society. So we have to be very careful not to allow ourselves to be influenced, not to be tinged ourselves with this grey, negative emotional attitude. We have to break through all this, burst through all this, into a positive emotional state; a state of love, a state of faith and devotion, a state of compassion, a state of joy. And we should try, we should do our best to encourage positive emotions, positive attitudes in other people.

Now secondly: *Psychological Conditionings*

These too are something to be broken through - psychological conditionings. But what are they? Psychological conditionings may be defined as factors that influence, even determine our mental attitudes and our behaviour without our being fully aware of it, or perhaps without our being aware of it at all.

Suppose for instance we are born in this country, born in England. We are naturally brought up speaking the English language, unless of course we are born in Wales. We are educated at an English school. We are inevitably exposed to all the rigours of the English climate. And all this will affect or influence our outlook very very deeply indeed, without our knowing it, without our being aware of it; and it will result in an English psychological conditioning, rather than, say, in a French or a Chinese psychological conditioning. The nett result will be, the practical upshot will be, that we shall see everything, we shall look out upon the world as an Englishman. We shall see things from that special point of view. When for instance, say, the Battle of Waterloo is mentioned, we shall at once think of victory, we won't think of defeat; and we shall think it natural to see things as an Englishman, we'll take it for granted that is *the* way of seeing them — that is how things are. We shan't think 'Well, this is how I see things just because I am an Englishman'. We shall think 'This is how things are, this is the way that things are.' And we might even think it's right and proper that things should be 'as they are'. And we may even be rather surprised when we one day, perhaps, wake up to the fact that other people in the world see things rather differently.

Now I've given just one example, but psychological conditioning is of very many different kinds. We have in fact gone into this before in some detail. We're psychologically conditioned by our race and by our class. We're psychologically conditioned by the kind of work that we do. Just think of it — you do the same kind of work in many cases, so many hours a day, so many days a week, so many weeks a year, so many years of your life; you are psychologically conditioned by this: You start seeing things in a special way, from the standpoint of your employment, your profession, your occupation, your vocation. We're psychologically conditioned by the social and economic system of which we are a part. Socially and economically speaking we are little tiny cogs in a gigantic machine, and the cog of course is geared to the machine. We're psychologically conditioned by that.

We're psychologically conditioned by the religion into which we are born, or in which we've been brought up. A few weeks ago I conducted a seminar up in Birmingham, and I remember that during the question and answer period discussion turned upon the question of guilt, and how guilt resulted from an orthodox Christian bringing-up. And just as a matter of interest I called upon members of the audience just to say if they felt that their Christian upbringing —

if they had had one — had instilled into them a sense of guilt, and whether that had had an unhappy effect upon their lives as a whole. And three women spoke up at once, three rather elderly women, and they all said that this sense of guilt had been instilled into them when they were young — they'd been psychologically conditioned to feel guilty and that this had remained with them all their lives, and had been the source of much unhappiness, and even misery and suffering in their lives. So this is what one means by psychological conditioning arising out of even the religion into which one is born, or in which one is brought up.

So what does all this go to show? All this goes to show that we are in fact just a mass of psychological conditionings. We're a class conditioning plus an economic conditioning, plus a religious conditioning and a national conditioning and a linguistic conditioning. We're conditioned in this way, psychologically conditioned in this way. There's very little in fact that is really ours, that is really our own. There is very little in us and in our lives, in our experience that is really free, that is really spontaneous, that is really, in a word, us. For the most part we think, and we even feel, and we certainly act in certain ways, because we've been conditioned to do so. For the most part we're no better than Pavlov's dogs. A bell rings and we react, we respond — and bells are ringing all the time. Economic bells, social bells, political bells, religious bells. The bells go on ringing and ringing, and we're responding like mad to all of these. And that we call our 'freedom'. And this is the situation. So we may say that really, truly, we are machines rather than human beings. So we have to break through all these conditionings. We have to shatter, we have to smash if you like, our own 'mechanicalness'. Otherwise there's no Buddhahood. Not even in fact any real spiritual life.

Now this kind of breaking through, this breaking through the barrier, breaking through the obstacle of psychological conditionings means a sort of dissociation, a sort of de-identification of ourselves. A dissociation of ourselves from that part of us which is machine-like if you like. The spiritual person we may say, will not think of himself as an Englishman, even when he sees the 'Union Jack' waving in the breeze, red white and blue, he won't experience any sort of *special emotion*. He'll just think 'Well that's the Union Jack, it's the flag of this country, fine.' But he won't experience that sort of upsurge of emotion when he sees the Union Jack. Whereas on the other hand, the 'Stars and Stripes' or the 'Hammer and Sickle' will leave him quite cold. He won't feel and he won't act as an Englishman. He won't think of himself as (these are of course becoming outmoded terms but we become more subtle and we've no new, more subtle terms to replace the old ones)... he won't think of himself as say working class or middle class or any other class; won't think of himself as a townsman — even though he lives in the town — or as a countryman — even though he lives, or doesn't live in the country. He won't think of himself as essentially being a doctor, or a bus conductor, or a housewife. And therefore will not think or feel or act out of any such conditioning. He'll act on the other hand, or she will act on the other hand, freely, spontaneously, creatively, out of the depths if you like of pure, clear awareness. Such a person eventually won't even think of himself as a human being, not even as a *human* being. If such a person, if such a spiritual person or one might even say 'transcendental' person, thinks at all — which is doubtful — he'll think of himself as Buddha, and will act as Buddha, because he or she will have broken through all psychological conditionings, will have broken through into Buddhahood.

Now thirdly: ***Breaking through Rational Thinking***

Breaking through the rational mind itself. And this kind of breaking through is indeed difficult to imagine. We can well understand the need for breaking through our negative emotions. These are obviously, these are evidently undesirable. We can even understand with a bit of an effort, can understand at least theoretically, intellectually, the need for breaking through psychological conditionings. But well though we understand this, well though we understand the need to break through negative emotions and psychological conditionings, it is after all the rational mind that is understanding all this. And now that mind is being asked to contemplate, being asked to agree to its own dissolution, its own destruction, and this is very difficult indeed, and it's terrifying to experience this, even as an idea, even as a thought, even as a concept.

Now the rational mind we know is an extremely important faculty. It's been developed over hundreds of thousands of years of evolution. The rational mind is the chief Instrument of human survival, and it's natural that the rational mind should be valued, and valued very highly. But it should not be overvalued. The rational mind is invaluable for practical purposes. After all it was the rational mind that discovered fire. It was the rational mind that invented the wheel; that domesticated animals at the dawn of history; that forged tools and implements; that established cities and systems of government; that built roads and bridges. And more recently it's the rational mind, the rational intelligence that created the aeroplane and the radio and the television, and it's the rational mind that split the atom. And it's the rational mind that is at present planning to land a man on the moon. And it's the rational mind that is at present dreaming — if you can speak of the rational mind dreaming — of inter-planetary and inter-galactic travel. We'll soon have interplanetary and inter-galactic travel agencies apparently! And man, the rational mind, may well achieve all this. It's not impossible, it's not beyond the bounds of possibility, but, *but*— and it's a very big 'BUT' indeed — the rational mind may do all this, may achieve all this, may accomplish all this, and even more that we can't even imagine — that we can't even dream of at present — *but*, the rational mind cannot know Reality. It cannot know Reality.

In the Buddha's words, or rather word, Reality, Truth itself, the Absolute, the Unconditioned, the ultimate, is *attakavaccara*. Attakavaccara, taka or tarka means 'rational thinking, rational thought', even 'logic'. And the Buddha says clearly, emphatically, unmistakably, that in order to experience Reality one must go beyond this. One must break through the rational mind, even break *down* the rational mind. Only then can one break through into Buddhahood. And for most people of course this is very very difficult indeed to accept. The rational mind has achieved so much that we like to think it can do everything. We like to think that with the rational mind we can understand Buddhism. We like to think that with the rational mind we can understand the nature of Enlightenment. We like to think that with the rational mind we can understand Zen. People write books about Zen, all written with the rational mind, many many books about Zen, written by all sorts of people in the West, all written with the rational mind. Whereas Zen in fact is nothing but a gigantic, an overwhelming protest against the assumption, the blasphemous presumption or assumption even, that the rational mind can know Reality. Zen we may say, gives the rational mind most rudely a violent slap in the face.

Usually people like to think that the rational mind is omnipotent — that it can do everything, achieve everything, measure everything, know everything. They don't like to be asked to contemplate the weakness of the rational mind. And they don't like to be reminded of the power of the non-rational, and for this reason they react rather strongly sometimes to things

which remind them of the non-rational, or which make them feel perhaps, within themselves, the presence, even the pulling even the pushing, of the non-rational. This is why some people react rather strongly to things like insanity. They don't like to think about insanity or even to see insanity, and it's perhaps significant that in this country we lock up the insane, or at least we put them away — they're skeletons in the social cupboard. Even the quite harmless ones are put away, they're not allowed to be seen. They're not allowed to walk about. Whereas in India, by contrast, in India the insane are usually allowed to roam about freely. You can see them in the streets of the big cities, in the streets of the village — harmless lunatics. Because Indians are not afraid of the insane, and they're not afraid of the insane because they're not afraid of the non-rational. Similarly, we tend to be afraid of violent emotions. We like nice, gentle, soft, domesticated, tame, manageable emotions. We don't like violent emotions which might carry us away out of ourselves, cause us to lose control. And of course we don't like violent emotions such as those of sex very often, we react in some cases rather strongly to drugs, or to surrealist art, or even to comparatively harmless objects, or people like Negroes and like gypsies. It's rather significant that gypsies are harassed so much by urban district councils and the like, because they represent this too — the irrational, the unharnessable, the unmanageable, the untameable. They all represent for us the power of the non-rational. They all represent the possibility and also the danger of breaking through the rational mind.

#### Fourthly and lastly: **Breaking Through the Time Sense**

Well what is the time sense? Well what is time? One could say 'Time is security', that is, time is 'insecurity'. But perhaps this is too cryptic. There are two kinds of time we may say — some people say three or four, but let's say two today — two kinds of time; there's *organic time* and there's *mechanical time*. Or we may say there's organic time and there's 'clock time'.

By organic time we mean our own total experience of pure continuous duration, with no thought of before, no thought of after, just the direct immediate present, the experience of pure, total duration, continuous. Here there's no splitting up of the time flow into past, present and future. But mechanical or clock time is the experience of traveling as though along a straight line. So this is also sometimes called 'linear time', and it's divided into past, present, future. It's chopped up into hours, minutes, seconds. Organic time we may say, expands and contracts according to the intensity of one's experience. If one's experience is more intense then organic time expands, if it's less intense then organic time contracts. But clock time is perfectly uniform, it's the same all the time. The same even, dead level.

So clock time does not correspond to organic time and clock time cannot measure organic time or one's experience within, as it were, organic time. When one speaks in terms of breaking through the time sense or breaking through time, one means mechanical time or clock time, and it's from this that one must emancipate oneself. Most of us, sad to say, are slaves of clock time, especially those who live in cities, because we have to live according to the clock. We have to live by the clock. Let me give an example: We say for instance, it's time to eat. Now, we may not feel hungry, we may not feel hungry at all, but it's twelve o'clock or its one o'clock, it's time to eat. So we have to eat all the same because it's time to eat, and in the same way we work when it is *time* to work; we sleep when it is *time to* sleep, bedtime eleven o'clock, twelve o'clock, as the case may be. We even meditate when it is *time* to meditate, and often, only too often, for no other reason.

Our lives are geared to the clock. And in this way the natural self-regulating rhythm of the organism is destroyed, and one's experience of organic time, of pure duration, is lost. Our life experiences don't as it were unfold or flower from the depths of the eternal now, but we see them sort of strung out, just like washing on a line, and we mentally therefore anticipate our experiences, we sort of prearrange them. We draw up programmes and diaries and so on, and this because essentially, basically, we don't trust ourselves to the experience of organic time, of pure continuous duration. We don't trust ourselves to this because we feel insecure, and this is why I said at the beginning, that time, clock time that is, is security, and therefore insecurity. We like to think within this context of clock time, 'Well, tomorrow's Monday. Tomorrow I'll be doing so-and-so. Tuesday at such-and-such o'clock, I'll be doing so-and-so. Next week I'll be doing that. Next year I'll be doing so-and-so'. So, some people plan and organize their whole lives in this way, right up to the day of retirement. And after that of course there's just a blank, a sort of dreary, miserable space before death. And this is really a frightening thought. And of course it's not altogether our own fault, not our own fault individually, because pressure is brought on us all the time to live in this way; to regulate our lives by the clock, to gear our existence to the clock. And this means of course really not living at all. So we have to break through the time sense, break through mechanical time. We have as it were to smash the clock, or at least to allow it to run down.

Well so much for what we must break through. We must break through negative emotions, break through psychological conditionings, break through rational thinking, and break through the time sense. And in this way, from all these four directions as it were simultaneously, from all these four angles simultaneously, we break through into, we converge upon, Buddhahood.

Now Buddhahood has various aspects. And these various of Buddhahood correspond to different aspects of the conditioned, the mundane, the samsara. If we break through the conditioned at a certain point, we shall break through into the corresponding aspect of Buddhahood. If, for instance, we break through the sufferings of conditioned existence, we shall break through into the bliss, the happiness, the everlasting joy of Buddhahood. And similarly, with regard to the four aspects of the conditioned with which we've been dealing. Breaking through negative emotions means breaking through into the positive emotions of love and compassion, which are aspects of Buddhahood. Breaking through psychological conditionings means breaking through into a state of complete freedom and spontaneity and unconditioned creativity. Breaking through the rational mind means breaking through into a state of what we may describe as 'transcendental non-rationality'. And breaking through the time sense means breaking through into the experience of the eternal, the everlasting now.

So all of these are characteristics of Buddhahood. Love and compassion, freedom and spontaneity, transcendental non-rationality, and living in the eternal now. So they will be, they are characteristics also of the Enlightened person. The Enlightened person will manifest, will radiate positive emotions, will be completely unconditioned and spontaneous in behaviour, will therefore be unpredictable - may be liable to do any thing at any moment, will not be attached to rational thinking, not bound by rational thinking, and will be quite devoid of any sense of mechanical time, will be living from moment to moment and enjoying as it were, the bliss of pure duration.

So we see from all this, that the Enlightened person cuts a rather unconventional figure. You may be interested to hear that some of the Hindu texts raise the question, right at the end of a long discourse on the spiritual life and nirvana and so on, well, how will the liberated person,

the Enlightened person appear to others? What will he look like to others? Well within himself he'll be Enlightened, he'll know Reality, he'll know God or he'll know Brahma. But what will he be like, what will he appear like to others? And they give a very interesting reply. They give a threefold reply some of these texts. They say that to others the Enlightened person will appear; one, like a child; two, like a madman; three, like a ghost. Like a child because the child is spontaneous and uninhibited. Like a madman because, well the Enlightened person in a sense is just mad. And as for the ghost; the ghost of course just comes and goes. You don't know where he comes from, you don't know where he goes to. The Enlightened person is just like that; you can't keep track, you can't tie him down, you can't corner him — he just slips through your fingers like that. And there's also something a little uncanny about him. So the Enlightened person we may say, one who has broken through into Buddhahood, certainly will not appear to other people like a respectable and law-abiding citizen.

Now secondly, second main heading; **How one Breaks Through**

We have to deal with this rather more briefly. First of all, Breaking through in general; and secondly, breaking through the four aspects of conditioned existence already mentioned.

### ***Breaking through in general***

Breaking through anything, breaking through any aspect of conditioned existence, any aspect of the Wheel of Life, is accomplished mainly through the cultivation of awareness, mindfulness, awareness, recollection. Awareness we may say, is the great dissolver of negative emotions. Awareness is the great dissolver also of the psychological conditionings, in fact of every other aspect of the conditioned within ourselves. So much so that we may even say that there is no spiritual life without awareness. To the extent that there is awareness, there is spiritual life. It is better one might even say to steal with real awareness, than to do a puja without any awareness at all. An action, a thought, a feeling, is spiritual to the extent that it is accompanied by awareness; and whatever it may be, if there is anything negative in it, anything that smacks of the conditioned, the awareness with which it is done, if that awareness is maintained, will sooner or later eat away all that conditionedness, all that negative side. So awareness is of paramount importance in the spiritual life. No spiritual life without awareness. No breakthrough, no breaking through without awareness. We've often touched on this topic, even dealt with it at length, so we won't dwell upon it anymore this evening.

Breaking through is also accomplished by means of regular spiritual practice of one kind or another; whether it's puja, performing the sevenfold puja, making offerings and so on, whether it's meditation, whether it's just telling ones beads, or giving dana regularly, because every time one practices, an effect is produced. The practice may be very little, may be very limited, but there is an effect, and if you keep up the limited practice, if it's regular, if it's daily, even hourly, or even weekly — something done.. .an effect; something done again.. .an effect; something done.. .an effect. In this way the effects accumulate. They accumulate within in the form of what the Yogachara calls 'the good seeds'. And if we keep up the practice, the regular practice long enough, these good seeds, as it were, within us, these wholesome effects will accumulate to a point of, as it were, bursting, and there will be a breakthrough. But of course this way we must have patience.

An example which is often given which I have mentioned before, is that of the rock which

was split with the twentieth blow. Someone gave a great rock nineteen tremendous blows and the rock was just, apparently, as before; but with the twentieth stroke it split wide open into two halves. So the first nineteen strokes were not useless. Without those nineteen even though they didn't appear to produce an effect, the twentieth could not have done its work. There was some effect from every one of those nineteen. So this is another way of breaking through, of keeping up these strokes of regular practice one after the other, even month after month, year after year, ten, twenty, thirty years, the effects accumulate, tensions accumulate, and then.... one breaks through. This is another way, another general method.

Breakthrough is also achieved in ones life, sometimes, by the introduction of a new factor, especially a new person. By which one means something or someone that or whom jolts one out of our accustomed routine, who if you like breaks up our accustomed routine, who gets us to some extent at least, out of our conditionedness. This is another way in which, generally speaking, we can break through.

So much for breaking through in general, now for just the four obstacles, or breaking through the four obstacles, the four aspects of the conditioned which I've already mentioned:

### ***How does one break through Negative Emotions?***

How? Principally of course, obviously, by cultivating the positive emotions. And here practices like the metta bhavana, development of universal loving-kindness, though rather difficult, can help very much. One can also break through negative emotions by associating more with people who are emotionally positive; people who are either full of love or compassion or joy, or confidence, or even just ordinary cheerfulness. This can help very much indeed. Also by eating the right kind of food not the sort of food that clogs the system and weighs you down, and makes you feel sort of heavy and stiff and lethargic — the sort of food which only too many people in Anglo-Saxon countries do eat. One can also break through into the positive emotions, at least to some extent, by living more in the open air - rather difficult in this country of course. I've also got in my notes, 'especially in the sunshine', and I rather wondered when I read the notes if it would be raining at the time of giving the lecture. But this does help. I was reading a little while ago an article in a magazine, according to which experiments had been conducted in America which showed that, if you worked in the sunshine and if you were exposed to more sunshine, you became more intelligent, not basically, but you could deploy your intelligence more successfully. They tried experiments with students, college students. They gave one group of students their examination at the end of a period of bad weather, and the other group of students their examination at the end of a nice sunny spell, and the students that were examined at the end of the nice sunny spell did far better than the others, even though in other respects they were completely equal. And this experiment apparently was repeated a number of times - one experiment wouldn't have been enough to establish the point — and it was found that sunlight stimulated intelligence. And sunlight certainly stimulates the positive emotions. So if one wants to break through into a more positive emotional state, well, stay in the sunshine as much as you can. And of course look at things like green grass and blue sky, and try to surround oneself with bright colours. Perhaps one should dress more brightly and more colourfully, because all this has a sort of psychological effect. It's known for instance in mental hospitals, if you put the patient in a room which is decorated in grey, he just gets more and more depressed, but if you put him into a room which is pink or red he'll be stimulated. The same with yellow, the same with orange

— these are stimulating colours. And it's perhaps a bit significant that until quite recently in the Anglo-Saxon countries at least, conventional dress for men was so dark. It was black or brown or navy blue, or a dull grey, and this must have had a horrible sort of psychological effect upon the people who were wearing this sort of dress. And it therefore is I think a quite healthy psychological sign that nowadays so many people, especially men, are wearing more colourfully dress. It means a more positive emotional state, a more positive emotional attitude. Well, so much for how one breaks through into a more positive emotional state through the negative emotions.

Next; ***How does one break through Psychological Conditionings?***

Mainly of course through awareness. Awareness that one is conditioned, is mechanical, is not free. But how does one develop this sort of awareness? How does one extend it? How does one amplify it? One can sometimes do this by subjecting oneself quite deliberately to an unfamiliar type of conditioning. Suppose for instance that ones psychological conditioning is English. Then just go and live a while in Italy, or go and live a while in India or Japan. And if one lives there for a while, one will become aware of ones own conditioning, because one will become aware of the conditioning of the people in the midst of whom one is living; their conditioning, with which one is unfamiliar, will impinge on your conditioning, sometimes rather uncomfortably — not to say painfully — and this will make you aware of your conditioning.

For instance you go to India and you find people there have got all sorts of horrible and disgusting habits, not at all English. And one of the dreadful things they do is, they eat their food with their hand. Most of them, they don't use a knife or a fork or a spoon — their hand goes straight into the rice and they eat with their hand — and English people at first are, very often, deeply shocked by this, and they think it terribly unhygienic, because you are eating food with your hand. Admittedly the Indians wash it before eating with it, but that doesn't impress these people very much. But after you've been there a bit, or after you've been there a while, you begin to get used to it, it seems to make a sort of sense, and eventually one realizes that it was only because of ones own conditioning that one felt at first shocked to see people eating with their hand. And to the extent that you become aware of your conditioning, to that extent you become free from that conditioning.

So it's a very good thing to travel, to see new parts of the world, new countries, to meet new people, different people, people of different races, religions, languages, colours, cultures. It makes us just a little bit more aware of our own conditioning. As we get older of course we often tend to visit only the old familiar places, and to see only the old familiar faces. We think 'Ah well, I'll go back there, I went there ten years ago, fifteen years ago, I've been there maybe every year for ten, fifteen, twenty years. Let's have another holiday there. It's the same old hotel keeper, it's the same old beach — it's not changed.' In this way we just travel in the same rut over and over and over again, and as we get older and older — and we'll all get older one day — we have to beware of this. So this is one of the ways or just a few of the ways in which we can break through psychological conditionings.

And then; ***How to break through Rational Thinking?***

Something rather more difficult. Traditionally there are several ways. The Perfection of

Wisdom literature employs the method of paradox. A paradox has been described or defined as a truth standing on its head to attract attention. But it's really much more than that. The paradox is a using of conceptual thought to transcend conceptual thought. The Perfection of Wisdom texts for instance say, or the Buddha says in these texts, 'The bodhisattva, the one who wants to gain Enlightenment for the sake of all, must vow to save all beings.' He must vow 'I'll deliver, I'll save, I'll help all beings in the universe.' And then it says immediately afterwards, 'At the same time he must realize that no beings exist', otherwise he is not a bodhisattva. And in the same way the texts say that the bodhisattva must go all out for Enlightenment, practice the perfections — the *paramitas*— sacrifice life and limb, shed his blood. At the same time he must realize that there's no such thing as Enlightenment, and no-one to attain it anyway. This is the paradoxical approach of the Perfection of Wisdom literature, which really brings the intellect right up against it.

And this sort of method, this sort of approach is exemplified, is crystallized if you like in the 'koan' of Zen. I'm not going to try to define a koan, but those who've studied literature - admittedly literature written mainly with the rational mind - about Zen, about the koan, know that the koan is very much used in Zen, especially in the Rinzai school, and it's a sort of apparently contradictory, or even nonsensical statement. For instance when you clap your two hands together you produce a clapping sound. So the koan says 'What is the sound of one hand clapping?' You have to meditate on this. Or the Master says to the disciple, as the disciple enters his room, 'What are you carrying in your hand?' So the disciple says 'I'm not carrying anything.' And the Master says 'Well drop it then!' And there are hundreds of such koans, I mean people who give lectures on Zen, which is a thing I very rarely do, they quote hundreds of them at you from the platform. It's a very dazzling sort of display of intellectual fireworks. And in the traditional system the disciple meditates, poor chap, meditates upon one or another of these koans. He doesn't meditate upon sublime truths of Buddhist philosophy, no, 'the sound of one hand clapping.' I'm not carrying anything in my hand, but I've got to drop it. Or 'Mu', which is not the sound made by a cow, it means 'nothing.' Mu, 'not'. And he meditates, he spends years meditating on this, years. And he's brought up right against the limitations of the rational mind. We are told he sometimes breaks out into a sweat. There he is sitting on his seat in the meditation hall, sometimes for hours and even days and weeks on end. He doesn't know sometimes whether it's snowing or raining or whether the sun is shining. He doesn't know whether it's spring or autumn. He doesn't know whether it's day or night. He's just stuck with this koan; and sometimes we are told it becomes like a great lump of ice, or it becomes like a great red hot iron ball which he's swallowed, and he can't get it down and he can't get it up. But eventually he breaks through, he bursts through the rational mind. But this method, the koan method presupposes great faith in the Master. It presupposes a strong traditional system of discipline, and this method, this koan method is therefore, perhaps, rather difficult to transplant to the West.

But there are other ways of breaking through the rational mind, not perhaps so drastic as the koan method, but certainly still effective. We can for instance, have more recourse to non-conceptual modes of communication. We can have greater recourse to things like myth, legend, symbolism. These are coming nowadays, more and more into their own. Formerly when people translated the Buddhist scriptures, they just cut out all the mythical bits. They said 'Oh well, the monks put those down later. It's the rational bits which are the real important bits — that's what the Buddha really said.' Very nice and rational and logical and intelligible; all the mythological stuff, and the legend and the symbolism, they just cut out. But

fortunately for us Jung has rather altered all that; he's taught us to appreciate and to evaluate myth rather differently. So we've put all the mythological bits back now and we read them, whereas before we neglected them. And we find that they speak to us and they have a meaning — not a conceptual meaning but they have a message, they have an impact. There's something that carries over from them above and beyond, or even if you like, round about or underneath the rational mind. These myths, these symbols, whether the ladder down which the Buddha came from heaven to earth, or his seven steps, or his encounter with the earth goddess under the bodhi tree, or Muchalinda. All these myths and legends and symbols, they all help to communicate the non-conceptual, the trans-conceptual truth of Buddhism, of the Buddha's experience of Enlightenment. Because we shouldn't think that communication is only conceptual, only verbal, only a matter of ideas and concepts, and thoughts, and philosophies. It's much more than that. And this understanding, this realization, we're putting into practice, or trying to put into practice to some extent, on the next occasion of Wesak. That's to say next Sunday, here. We're going to have a Wesak meeting, a Wesak celebration, but — believe it or not — there are not going to be any speeches, not any speeches; which is something I think almost unprecedented in the modern Buddhist world. I've attended Wesak celebrations in the East which were absolutely marathon events, so far as speeches were concerned — one speech after another, two hours, three hours, four hours of speeches. One, usually politician — I don't know how they got on to our platform, but — usually one politician after another. So, we are having no speeches. Just music, meditation, poetry reading, even silence — but no speeches. Trying to emphasize the importance of the non-conceptual, the mythical, the symbolical, if you like the archetypal, the direct, the experiential.

Now finally; *How to break through the Time Sense:*

Well, you can make a very good beginning by doing without a watch. Speaking personally, when I was in India, I did without a watch — believe it or not — for twenty years. I never carried one, I never owned one, never possessed one. But when I came back to England — this is a rather interesting experience — when I came back to England, I hadn't been here more than a few days, when I was whisked off to the Buddhist Society's summer school. And one evening I had to give a lecture — that was the main event of the day, the evening lecture. So along I strolled to the lecture hall, and I saw a friend of ours standing at the side of the door, looking at his watch, and looking at the clock above the entrance, and when I arrived he said, 'You're two minutes late!' Two minutes late.. .so, well at the end of that summer school I was presented with a watch, which I still have, which I still wear. And I always consider this as symbolical. It was a little chain that was put on me some four or five years ago. So perhaps, one should make a start by dispensing with ones watch. Now, one can also to some extent break through mechanical time, or ones mechanical time sense, by having a job — if that's possible — which will not oblige one to live according to the clock, where one will not have regular hours of work. Well this I appreciate is very very difficult. If you went into your office just when you felt like it, or when you felt you wanted to work, well, the wheels of industry might not turn all that smoothly, and they might not appreciate it; especially if you say, worked in a newspaper, and they wanted to get out the latest edition and you strolled in two days later, that wouldn't help very much. So it's rather difficult to do this, except of course for people like artists who can work, we are told, just when they feel like working, without having to stick to any deadline or any programme, or without having to keep their eye on the clock.

So these are just a few hints as to how to break through.

Now thirdly, lastly; **Where and When one Breaks Through:**

Here, we must be even more brief, and also a little paradoxical. One may say that the most favourable conditions for breaking through are the unfavourable ones. Usually one does not break through when things are going well, when it's all plane sailing, everything according to plan — no hitches — one doesn't usually break through then. One is much more likely to break through in times of crisis. This is, or this was the Buddha's experience. The Buddha came to a crisis. The Buddha had sweated and struggled, and starved himself for six years, and he seemed — to himself at least — to be no nearer to the goal. So he sat down. He sat down under that bodhi tree, according to legend, on a great heap of grass provided by a friendly herdsman, had a drink of milk provided by a friendly herdsman; he sat down and he gritted his teeth, and he clenched his jaw we are told, and he said 'I am not getting up until I have gained Enlightenment. I may die here. Flesh may wither away, blood may dry up, but until I've gained Enlightenment I'm not getting up from this seat.' So for him it was Enlightenment or death. This was the crisis for him. Either I get Enlightenment or I die on this spot. This was the crisis which, in a sense, he created for himself - this crisis condition; death or Enlightenment. So he gained Enlightenment. And it's that Enlightenment which we'll be celebrating next Sunday.

Some people we know, break through at the time of physical deprivation. It's as though the weakness of the body strengthens the spirit. Some people have been known to break through when undergoing prolonged fast. I've known people who have broken through in this way, after fasting, in the case of one man, for fifty-six days. But then he had an important breakthrough, on this fifty-sixth day. His wife fasted for forty-six days. She didn't have a breakthrough. She told me she was fasting because she was angry with *him*. But he broke through, because he was fasting with a different motive.

And sometimes, strange to say, one can break through when one is ill. This would seem to be a very unfavourable time — you can't meditate, you can't read sometimes, but quite a number of people have had important breakthroughs, in fact crucial breakthroughs, when they have been ill. And many people know that when you get a high fever, especially in the East this is the case; when you get a high fever though you've got the fever, though in a sense you are sick, even suffering, you're sort of strangely exhilarated, and awareness can be intensified, and you can have a breakthrough at that time.

You can also have a breakthrough, again, when you've had a sort of shock; when you've suffered say a great bereavement, when you've lost someone near and dear to you, or when you've lost an enormous sum of money, or all your plans have been laid in ruins, or everything is hopelessly astray, contrary to expectations; when you seem to have no hope, no prospect, no possibility. Sometimes in conditions like this, one will have a breakthrough.

And of course, according to *The Tibetan Book of the Dead*, you can break through even at the time of death. Death is, in a sense, the greatest crisis, the most crucial situation of all; and it also therefore represents the greatest opportunity. According to the tradition which is embodied in *The Tibetan Book of the Dead*, at the time of death and after death, one experiences, everybody experiences, at least momentarily, what is known as the 'clear light of the void', the light of Reality, shining as it were, upon one. And this is not anything that comes from outside; this is the light of one's own true mind, which is identical, ultimately, in

it's absolute depth, with Reality itself. And if one can only recognize this, if one can only realize this, that this light, this great white light shining upon one, is not coming from outside, is coming from inside, is oneself, is one's own true nature, transcendental though it is, awe-inspiring though it is, this is oneself. If one can only realize this, recognize this, at that moment, either just during the time of death, or after death, then one is liberated, and then there may be for one no more rebirth.

Now we've covered this afternoon, and this evening, quite a lot of ground. We've tried to understand what we break through, how we break through it, and where and when we break through. Inevitably our approach has been rather conceptual, even though at the same time, the limitations of the conceptual have been indicated. So I'd like to close, I'd like to leave you with, a *picture* of breaking through. A picture from Tibetan Buddhism. A picture from the Tantric tradition. A picture, an image, a form, of what is known as a wrathful deity, or even a wrathful Buddha.

And what is this wrathful deity, this wrathful Buddha? What does he look like? How does he appear? First of all, it's a dark blue figure, a male figure, very very powerfully built, with a massive torso, with enormous legs and enormous arms. Sometimes naked, sometimes draped in a tiger skin, and wearing a garland of skulls, of human skulls. And with three eyes, one in the middle of the forehead. And all these eyes, these three eyes, glare with an expression of terrible, of terrific anger. And from the mouth there stick out fangs, and a red, blood-dripping tongue, and this fearful dark blue figure tramples upon enemies — upon ignorance and upon craving. And his hands, sometimes two, sometimes four, sometimes eight, sometimes sixteen, sometimes thirty-two grasp various weapons. And what does this figure, what does this form represent? This is the image of breaking through. This fearful, or this wrathful, or this terrific form, represents the forces of Enlightenment breaking, even bursting through the thick, through the dense darkness of ignorance and unawareness. This form, this image represents transcendental consciousness at the point of, at the moment of breaking through into Buddhahood. And the whole figure is surrounded by an aureole of flames. And what does this aureole of flames represent? Breaking through on any level, with regard to any medium, entails friction. Just as when the spacecraft re-enters the earth's atmosphere there is tremendous friction, and friction generates heat, and heat when it reaches a certain point, a certain pitch of intensity, results in a conflagration, in a bursting into flames. So the wrathful Buddha, bursting through the conditioned, is therefore surrounded by this aureole of flames. And these flames consume, these flames burn up the darkness, these flames consume everything conditioned, and when everything conditioned is burned up, is consumed, is broken through, then breaking through into Buddhahood is complete, is accomplished. There's then no more darkness, no more friction, no more flames, but only the shining figure of the Buddha, of a Buddha, another Buddha, seated beneath the bodhi tree.