

Tape 3: The Sangha or the Buddhist Community

Venerable Sir and Friends,

Yesterday we heard something about the Buddha. This morning we heard something about the Dharma. And this evening therefore we come to the third of the Three Jewels, the third of the Three Refuges, that is to say to the Sangha or, as we may say, the spiritual community. Now the word Buddha requires a little understanding a little explanation. The word Dharma, as we saw this morning, is quite complex in its meaning, there are in fact a number of different though related meanings. But the meaning of this word Sangha is comparatively simple. Sangha means literally a group or an assemblage. In modern Indian languages it is used in the sense of society or organisation, for instance you have that well known organisation, the Rastriya Sabak Sangha, one of the members of which attain celebrity by assassinating Mahatma Gandhi. So here Sangha means society or organisation or group. Now in Buddhism traditionally, leaving aside the more modern developments, traditionally there are three types of Sangha, or rather three levels or three grades of Sangha.

First of all what we may call the Spiritual; secondly, what we may call the Ecclesiastical; and thirdly, the social. Now, what do we mean by these terms, what do we mean by these expressions? By Sangha in the spiritual sense we mean primarily a group or an assemblage of those having certain spiritual experience or certain spiritual attainments in common. These people with these spiritual experiences or attainments in common may or may not be in actual physical contact. They may be living many, many miles away, many, many miles separated from one another. But they are united as it were spiritually, on a spiritual plane because of the spiritual experiences or attainments which they have in common.

So this is the Sangha as a purely spiritual body or community. People living at distant places, at different times but sharing above space and beyond time the same spiritual attainments and experiences. This is the spiritual Sangha or Sangha in the spiritual sense.

Now, secondly by Sangha in the ecclesiastical sense - I'm not very happy about this word 'ecclesiastical', but it is the best we have so we have to make do with it - by Sangha in the ecclesiastical sense, we mean a group of people as it were set apart from the world and united as a religious order by a common way of life especially by a common rule, by also, we may say, by a common spiritual ideal. So this is the Sangha in the ecclesiastical sense. Not exactly in the monastic sense because it is rather wider than the purely monastic, but as I have said as we may say in the ecclesiastical sense. The Sangha.

Now Thirdly Sangha in a social sense, this means the group or assemblage or collectivity of those accepting certain principles, certain spiritual principles, certain truths, regardless of vocation. That is to say regardless of whether they are as it were separated from the world as an order, especially a monastic order, or whether they are in the world even though not exactly of it.

So we have these three types of Sangha, or three different levels of meaning of the word: the Sangha as a spiritual community of people sharing certain spiritual experiences and attainments, Sangha in the sense of a group or body of people set apart from the world and united as a religious order by a common way of life and common rule, and thirdly Sangha in a social sense as those accepting certain principles regardless of their vocation, regardless of whether they formally profess or do not.

Now in Buddhism these three Sanghas, or the Sangha as existing on these three levels, are known first of all as the Ariya-Sangha, secondly as the Bhikshu Sangha and thirdly as the Maha Sangha. Now we are going to examine the meaning of each of these terms in turn. And in this way we shall explore, I hope, the full significance of the Sangha as traditionally accepted.

Now first of all the Sangha in the sense of Ariya Sangha. Ariya literally means noble. It also

means, by extension of meaning, holy. But here there is no ethnic meaning, not in the Buddhist context, even though the word Ariyan originally seems to have applied to a certain group of people or peoples coming down into India from the North. They were called Ariyans. So originally it was an gradually ethnic term, but it acquired a certain cultural spiritual significance and in Buddhism Ariya always means holy., in the sense of in contact with the transcendental. And the Ariya Sangha, the Noble or the Holy Sangha is so called because it consists of noble or holy persons the Ariya Pudgalas; in other words consists of those with certain spiritual, or better 'transcendental' experiences and attainments in common.

Now, in what we may call basic Buddhism the common sub-stratum of belief and doctrine which is shared by all the different schools, in basic Buddhism four types of holy person, of Ariya Pudgala, are distinguished. These were afterwards sub-divided as we shall see into eight. And these four or eight holy persons or Ariya Pudgalas constitute a sort of spiritual hierarchy, we may say, intermediate between Buddhahood and ordinary unenlightened, not so very holy humanity. So let us deal with the four Ariya Pudgalas, the four holy persons first.

Now, in order to understand the difference between them we must go a little into the background of Buddhist teaching. We have to refer to the path or the Way; the Path or the Way that is leading out of the Samsara, out of the Wheel of life into Nirvana or the stage of Enlightenment. The Path can, of course, be divided into successive stages in different ways; sometimes it is divided into eight stages, sometimes into seven, and so on. But the basic division is into three great stages three great stages of the Path. And these are known technically as the stage of Sila, or ethical observance; the stage of Samadhi, concentration and meditation; the stage of Prajna, or wisdom. These are the three stages which must be traversed in one way or another by everybody on the way to Enlightenment, or on the way to Nirvana. In brief, Ethics, Meditation, Wisdom. These are the three great stages.

Now, Wisdom - the third, the highest of these three stages - is again threefold.

We are going into a few technicalities but this is, I think, useful. Prajna is as I have said of three kinds, three kinds of Wisdom: what we call Srota-magga-prajna; what we call Cinta-magga-prajna; and what we call Bhavana-magga-prajna. Now what do these terms mean? Srota-magga-prajna means the wisdom which comes by hearing; the understanding that we get as it were second hand when we read something or when somebody tells us. This is acquired knowledge, acquired understanding, acquired wisdom, you may say. And it is called the wisdom which comes by hearing because in the Buddha's day and earlier very thing which was worth knowing was handed down by oral means. There were no books to read in those days, you had to hear everything. So a learned man was called Bahosrota, one who had heard much; not one who had read much; not one who had turned over many books; but one who had sat at the feet of many teachers and heard much directly from their lips. So the wisdom which comes by hearing really means the wisdom which we get from others at second hand, which we acquire in the process of learning.

The second kind, Cinta-magga-prajna, is that knowledge, that understanding, that wisdom which we acquire through our own independent thought and reflection; beginning with reflection on that which we have heard or learned. It is not enough to hear, it is not enough to learn, we must turn over what we have heard, turn over what we have learned in our own minds, and we must start thinking independently upon it. We must generate our own ideas, develop our own insights. And this is what is called Cinta-magga-prajna; the wisdom which arises through our own independent thought and reflection and investigation.

And the third kind of Prajna is Bhavana-magga-prajna, that which comes through Bhavana, which really means Concentration and Meditation. That which comes above and beyond the intellect, which is not heard, which is not learned, which is not even thought out intellectually, mentally; which comes as it were in the form of flashes of insight in the midst of deep or profound meditation; which is not conceptual, which is immediate and direct and intuitive as it were. This is what we call Bhavana-magga-prajna.

Now, when we divide the Path into the three stages of ethics, Meditation and Wisdom, the Wisdom which is here meant as the third and culminating stage of the Path is not the wisdom which comes by learning; not the wisdom which comes by thinking; but the wisdom which arises by means of direct insight in the course of, in the process of meditation. And this wisdom which arises in this way as a sort of direct insight, when the mind is very calm when the mind is very still when there is no mental activity when there is no discursive thought when Truth or Reality as it were directly unfolds itself, opens itself to the mind or flashes upon the mind. This is what is often technically called Vipassana; flashes of insight arising in the meditative mind, in the meditative consciousness *and* - ing the nature of ultimate reality. Now, this insight, this Vipassana as we call it, has two principal aspects. One, insight into the true nature of the conditioned, the mundane if you like; and insight into the true nature of the unconditioned. Insight or Vipassana, ultimately Wisdom, means in the first place seeing the whole of conditioned existence, seeing the whole of what we call the Samsara, the mundane world as impermanent, as transitory, as existing in a state of perpetual flux with nothing stable in it. Then as seeing it as sorrowful, as not capable of giving in any part full, final, ultimate satisfaction to the human heart. And then finally seeing it as basically unreal. Not unreal in the sense of completely illusory, but unreal in the sense of not ultimately real, not itself the absolute not the ultimate. So this is insight into, wisdom with regard to conditioned existence or the Samsara.

And the second kind of insight, the second kind of Vipassana, or ultimately Wisdom - because Vipassana when fully developed becomes Wisdom in the highest sense - this consists in the direct vision through as it were the veil of the conditioned, the direct vision of the unconditioned or Nirvana. It is as though through insight one pierces through the conditioned, one sees its true nature, one sees how it is riddled with impermanence, sorrow and unreality; but one pierces through and through until one comes out as it were on the other side and then, as the mists clear away one sees, one comes face to face with, one is confronted by the ultimate, Nirvana which one sees is permanent in the sense of above and beyond time, transcending past present and future; one sees it is blissful in the sense of affording complete and final satisfaction to the human heart; and one sees that it is an absolute existent, or rather an absolute above and beyond the extremes of existence: and non-existence, and so on.

So these two kinds of insight into the conditioned, into the unconditioned - these correspond to the first two grades or kinds of voidness or emptiness. There are four grades together, as we may be seeing in the course of some other talk. The insight into the conditioned, into the Samsara corresponds to what is called Asamskrta state, Emptiness of the Conditioned. When we see that conditioned existence is empty of the attributes or qualities of the unconditioned; that in the conditioned there is no permanence, no bliss and no reality. And then the second kind of insight, insight into Nirvana, into ultimate reality corresponds to Asamskrta-sunyata which is the emptiness or voidness of the unconditioned, consisting in the understanding or in the vision of the fact that in the unconditioned there is an emptiness of the conditioned. The unconditioned is empty with regard to the conditioned, in the sense that the attributes of the conditioned - that is to say impermanence, sorrow and unreality - are not found in the unconditioned; the unconditioned is empty with regard to those attributes of the conditioned. So we find the two kinds of insight therefore corresponding to these two kinds or grades of Sunyata - Voidness or Emptiness.

Now, in the Buddhist life, in the spiritual life we find that nothing comes all at once. Everything comes gradually; everything comes by degrees, whether it is Ethics, whether it is Concentration and Meditation, or whether it is even Insight. So at all these stages we have to go slowly and steadily and systematically. So we find therefore that there are different degrees of insight, insights of varying degrees of intensity. You can get a feeble flash of insight if your meditation is weak; it won't support more than a feeble flash of insight. But you can also have a very strong, a very brilliant flash of insight which illumines as it were far into the depths of existence, far into the depths of reality. So flashes of insight are of different degrees of intensity.

And here we come back to our original point and make connection again. It is according to the

degree of intensity of insight that the different types or kinds of Ariya Pudgala - Noble or Holy Person - are distinguished. You will remember that we have got four kinds basically of Holy or Noble Person, Ariya Pudgala; well, they are distinguished one from another into lower and higher grades, lower and higher types of Holy Person according to the degree of intensity of their insight. But the question which emerges is how do you measure the intensity of insight.

This is surely a very difficult question. If it is a question of measuring say the temperature, you have got a thermometer. But how do you measure insight ? This is not so easy.

Now, insight traditionally in Buddhism is measured in two ways. It is measured subjectively; it's measured also objectively. Subjectively it is measured according to the number of spiritual Fetters or Samyojanas which it is capable of breaking. Objectively it is measured according to the number of births or rebirths remaining after that insight is attained.

Now, the Samyojanas, the spiritual Fetters are ten in number. And it is these ten spiritual Fetters or ten Samyojanas which chain us down as it were to the Samsara, A o the Wheel of Life on which we revolve. Some of them are more gross; some of them are more subtle So let us take a look at them first. They are of course connected as we shall see with the objective way of measuring the intensity of insight, they are connected with the question of the number of births remaining.

Now, I have said there are four kinds or degrees of Ariya Pudgala - the Noble the Holy Person. First of all there is what we call the Sotapanna. The Sotapanna literally means Stream Entrant, as we shall see. Secondly what we call the Sakridagamin; thirdly the Anagamin; and fourthly the Arahant. These are the technical terms for the four Noble or Holy Persons. Now, first of all the Sotapanna. As I have said this literally means 'One who has entered the Stream.' The stream which leads eventually to Nirvana. And the Sotapanna has developed a degree of insight powerful enough to break three Fetters; the first three of the ten Fetters. So let us take a look at these three Fetters. We shall dwell upon them later then on the others because obviously they concern us more.

The first of the three is what is known as Sakkaya-drsti, which means Personality View. And this is twofold. I am sorry to give you so many technical terms. I have avoided them so far, but when we come on to certain aspects of the Dharma it is a little difficult to avoid them. The first kind of Sakkaya-drsti or Personality View is called Sasvata-drsti. This holds that after death personal identity persists unchanging. This is a form of traditional Soul belief. You have got a soul an unchanging ego identity within you, quite distinct from your body and this marches on after death. It continues. It either goes to heaven or it reincarnates. But the basic point is that it is unchanged. It is an entity, it is not a process. The other view, the other kind of Sakkaya-drsti or Personality View says that at death....finish! Everything finishes, you are cut off. Ucccheda literally means 'cut off'; that death is the end. So according to Buddhism these are two extreme views. One view that your ego soul - a sort of spiritual billiard ball almost, if you like - rolls on unchanged. The other, that the psychical side of life at the time of death, like the material side, like the physical side, stops. So Buddhism teaches a middle view. It teaches that death is not the end in the sense that when the physical body dies there is no complete end to the mental or the psychological or the spiritual processes. These continue. But is not an unchanging ego soul which continues, it is the process; the mental, the psychological, the spiritual process in all its complexity; ever changing, ever flowing on like stream. This continues, but not as anything unchanging. It is the continuity or the continuation essentially of a process. So this is the Buddhist view.

So the first Fetter to be broken is the idea that you have got a permanent unchanging soul within you which either goes on after death or is smashed at the time of death. And Right View consists in this respect in understanding that what goes on after death goes on as a process, a sort of flow, a stream if you like of psychical events. So much for the first Fetter: the Fetter of Personality View.

Secondly the Fetter of Vicikiccha, usually translated as 'skeptical doubt', or sometimes as 'indecision'. Now, this is not that honest doubt which Tennyson says 'there is more faith in it

than in all the Creeds' - it is not that. We may rather say that Vicikiccha in this sense, in this context represents a sort of unwillingness to come to a definite conclusion. People sort of wobble and they like to keep on wobbling; they like to sit on the fence as it were, saying 'Well, it may be true, it may not be true. It may be true, it may not be true.' They do not want to commit themselves. They keep in this wobbling state of indecisiveness, not really making up their minds and not really trying to. For instance if you say to people 'Well, is there life after death?' I'll say 'Well, there may be; maybe there isn't. I don't know. One. Ah I think one, one day I think the other.' And so they won't think it really out. They won't commit themselves to pursuing this to the end. They allow themselves to remain in that sort of state of doubt and indecision. So this unwillingness to think things out, this unwillingness to come to a conclusion, this unwillingness therefore to commit oneself, this is a Fetter which has to be broken according to the Buddha's teaching.

Then thirdly, the third Fetter is what we call Silabbata-paramasa. This is usually translated as 'Attachment to rights and ceremonies', but this is quite wrong. We must remember that some of these Buddhist scriptures were first translated towards the end of the Victorian period, and you may remember that around that time in this country, in the Church of England especially, the great Ritualist Controversy. You may remember that the Oxford movement had flourished earlier in the century and had tried to revive within the Church of England various ancient Catholic rituals. And some clergymen were very much in favour of introducing or reintroducing these rituals. Others, the more extreme Protestants, were vehemently against them. And all sorts of prominent figures from the Prime Minister Mr. Gladstone took a public part in this great controversy. So when they first of all started translating the scriptures just after this period, when they came across things like this they started thinking that the Buddha was a sort of pre-Christian Protest. You know, all against rights and ceremonies. And they were rather glad of his. They thought he was an early rationalist and humanist and all the rest of it. So, they represented the Buddha as being also against all the rights and ceremonies, the more colourful side of religion generally. Flying, of course, in the face of all the evidence.

But Silabbata-paramasa does not mean attachment to rights and ceremonies at all. The literal meaning is grasping ethical rules and religious observances, as ends in themselves. Sila here is not a right at all, Sila is an ethical observance, a rule. If you say that according to Buddhism must not take a life, this is a Sila, this is a rule, an ethical rule. An Abhata is a Vedic term for a sort of vow. Abhata is literally 'vow'; but in the sense of religious observance. If in Vedic times just before the Buddha's day and during the Buddha's lifetime, if you made a vow that you would spend the night in the Fire House conducting certain ceremonies, this was an Abhata, a vow, a religious observance which you undertook. But the operative word here in the wording of the Fetter is Paramasa, which means grasping. So the whole Fetter is 'grasping even Ethical Rules, even good religious observances as ends in themselves. And this brings us back to what I said this morning about the parable of the Raft. The Dharma in all its parts, in all its aspects is a means to an end. But if we start thinking that ethical rules, and if we start thinking that religious observances, even meditation, even study of the scriptures are ends in themselves, they become a Fetter; and a Fetter which has to be broken. So this Fetter, Silabbata-paramasa, means treating as ends in themselves religious practices, observances which are quite good as means to an end but which are not in fact themselves the end.

So these are the first three Fetters and having broken these three Fetters of Personality View, Belief in an Unchanging Ego-Soul (which makes me me and you you) Doubt and Indecision, an inability and unwillingness to commit oneself; and also Dependence upon Attachment to Religious Rules and Observances...having broken these three Fetters, there remain according to Buddhist tradition no more than seven births or rebirths within the Wheel of Life. There may be less, but there will not be more. So Stream Entry by breaking these three Fetters represents we may say an extremely important stage in the spiritual life. We may even go so far as to say that it represents conversion in the true sense; when you really get into the stream into the swim as it were of the spiritual life by breaking the three Fetters; by no longer thinking that I am I, this is something ultimate and irreducible... ME! No longer thinking that well, I'm not going to make my mind up, I'm not going to think things out. But actually thinking them out, committing oneself; and finally by realizing that all religious rights, practices,

observances are means an end, and using them as such. In this way one enters the Path, enters the Stream leading ultimately to Nirvana.

Now, Stream Entry through the breaking of these Fetters, by realizing the limitations of the Self, by realizing the necessity for definite commitment, by realising also the relativity of all religious practices and observances...Stream Entry by these means is within the reach and should be considered to be within the reach of all serious Buddhists. It is no use as it were jogging along with a little meditation and a perfunctory observance of the Precepts and just an odd thought or two about the Dharma or an odd glance at Nirvana, without seriously thinking that it is possible in this life to break the three Fetters, really enter the Stream and really get well on the way in this life towards Enlightenment or Nirvana. And it is because these three Fetters can be broken in this life, because the Stream can be entered in this life by all *serious* Buddhists that I have spoken in greater detail about these three Fetters.

Now let me deal with the other Fetters and the other Holy Persons rather more quickly.

The second Noble or Holy Person is as we have seen the Sakridagamin, or Once Returner; the one who returns only once more to this Earth as a human being. He has broken the first three Fetters and he partly breaks, he weakens two more.

He weakens the fourth Fetter which is Kamachanda - Desire or Urge for Sensuous Existence. And fifthly the Fetter of Vyapada - Animosity or Anger. These are very very strong, very powerful fetters, you see. The Stream Entrant breaks these three intellectual Fetters of Personality View, Doubt and Indecision, and Dependence upon Rights or Ethical Rules and Religious Observances; breaks them as it were fairly easily. They are intellectual Fetters. You can break them by thinking straight and clear. But the fourth and fifth, Desire for Sensuous Existence and Animosity or Anger, these are emotional Fetters. So they go much deeper. It is much more difficult to break them. So even the Sakridagamin, even the Once Returner is able only to weaken them. But even if they are weakened, even if one weakens the thirst for sensuous existence, weakens anger one becomes a Sakridagamin, or Once Returner returning after death only once more, or not more than once to the human world.

Just a few comments on these two Fetters. Kamachanda or desire or urge for sensuous existence. It will take as usual a little reflection to realize how strong this urge is. Let us just imagine as it were that we were suddenly deprived of all our senses. Just think for instance of a person who is blind. Well, they have no contact with the visual world. Just think what that would be like...confronted in Milton's language by a 'universal blank'. Just what it would be like. Sometimes we don't realise the value of sight. Think what it would be like not to see the sun, not to see trees, not to see houses, not to see other human beings. To be just blind. I remember in one educational institution which I heard about for a week every year all the girls - it was a girls' school - were blindfolded and were made to go about without being able to see just to teach them what it was like to be blind. So just this, suppose you were deprived of sight; well that would be very difficult. You would want to see but you would not be able to. Supposing also that you were deprived of your hearing. Suppose that you were not only blind, you were also deaf. You could not hear a note of music; you could not hear the birds singing in the morning; you could not hear the human voice. Well that would be quite terrible. But suppose other channels of sensuous communication were cut off. supposing you could not smell anything, could not taste anything, and supposing you developed anaesthesia, supposing you could not feel anything...well, what sort of state would your mind be in? Your one, your one urge as it were would be to make contact; you would want to see; you would want to hear; you would want to feel, you would want to taste. You would be in a terrible state of deprivation.

We can realise in this way how strong our urge or thirst or craving for sensuous existence through the senses is. This is just what happens.

But we know also that at the time of death we lose our senses, we no longer see we no longer hear, we no longer smell or taste or touch the mind is as it were torn away from these things and suspended as it were in a dreadful void; dreadful for those of course who want to contact the eternal world through the five senses. And this urge is very, very strong and, as I have said; and

it is this urge which the Sakridagamin, the Once-urner has to weaken so as to partly break this fourth Fetter before he becomes a Sakridagamin. And just as desire for sensuous existence is strong and difficult to overcome, difficult to break or even weaken, so also. Vyapada or *er*. Sometimes we feel as though there is a sort of well-spring of anger or animosity within us which is searching for an outlet. It is as though not that something happens and we become angry, but that the anger is there and we are looking around to see where we can hook the anger on to. This is what happens most of the time. So it is only by weakening this sort of urge that the Sakridagami becomes a Once-Returner; by weakening these two emotional Fetters the desire for sensuous existence, and anger or animosity. And he comes back no more than once to this earth, to this human world.

Thirdly, the third Holy Person, the third Ariya Pudgala, the Anagami or Non-Returner. He breaks all the five Lower Fetters as they are called, the three intellectual and the two emotional ones, and he does not come back to the human plane at all. He is reborn according to Buddhist tradition in a here called the Suddhavasā or Pure Abodes at the peak of what we call the Rūdhātu, the World of Pure Form. And he attains Nirvana or Enlightenment from there. He finally breaks these fourth and fifth Fetters whereas the Sakridagamin only weakened them, and therefore completely breaks the first five out of the ten Fetters. And this is sufficient to release him from the lower world, the human world, he is reborn as I have said in the Pure Abodes and after death reaches Nirvana from there.

I am giving you these ideas in the traditional terminology; they are capable of being translated into modern terminology and modern ideas, as perhaps we may see a little later on in this series of talks.

Now, fourthly the fourth Noble Person, the fourth Ariya Pudgala, is the Arahant. Arahant means simply the Worthy or the Worshipful, one who has gained Nirvana in this life, gained enlightenment in this life. He has of course broken the five lower Fetters but he also breaks the five higher Fetters which we shall just briefly enumerate. The sixth Fetter out of the ten is Rūparāga, desire for existence in the (world of form. You might translate it by saying the Archetypal Realm. Seventhly, the Fetter of desire for existence in the Formless World, Arūparāga. Eighthly, the Fetter of Mana or Conceit. Not conceit in the ordinary sense of 'I am very beautiful or very clever' and so on, but the conceit that 'I am I'; that I am not the Not-I; the conceit that I, as the Buddha said, neither better than others or worse than others or even the same as others, even equal to others; there is no shadow or trace of I concept here. So that Mana or Conceit in this sense is altogether broken by the Arahant. He does not even think that I gain Nirvana.

Ninthly, Uddhacca (or Auddhacca in Sanskrit) which means Instability, as it were Trembling. This is something very subtle; it is as though the Arahant to be is poised as it were between the last *ig*. aches of the phenomenal world and Nirvana; and he just as it were oscillates slightly, but he has not quite settled down in Nirvana. And this is called rambling or Wavering, Uddhacca. And the tenth Fetter, the most basic, the most impenetrable, the strongest of all is Avijjā - Ignorance; basic, primordial ignorance or spiritual darkness. But the Arahant breaks this too. He dispels this darkness with the light of Wisdom and he becomes an Arahant by realising Nirvana, having broken all the ten Fetters

So these are the four Ariya Pudgalas, the Noble or Holy Persons who make up the Ariya-sangha; Sangha in the sense of a spiritual community, a community of those who, independently of time and space, share the same spiritual experiences on the four different planes. Now, as I have said, the four are divided into eight according to what we call Magga and Phala, but I am not going into that now. Now, the Ariya Sangha is the Sangha, the spiritual community in the primary sense. Now when we say 'Sangham saranam gacchami' it is primarily in the Sangha as an Ariya-sangha, a spiritual community that we take refuge. The spiritual community does, or should, to some extent coincide with the monastic order, the Bhikshu-sangha and also with the Mahasangha, the Sangha or spiritual community in its widest sense. But primarily Sangha is spiritual community in this sense of a community spiritually speaking of Noble or Holy Persons sharing certain spiritual experiences or

transcendental experience or attainments on these different levels.

Now, secondly we come to the Bhikshu-sangha. This consists of those who have gone forth as it is technically called from the household life and joined the monastic order founded by the Buddha. I say the monastic although the word 'monas' when used in a Buddhist context has a rather different connotation from what it has in the Christian West. Sometimes when we speak I know in this country about a Buddhist monastery people tend to think of a great building with high walls all round and they think of the inmates as being enclosed, shut up in little cells with grilles, and not being allowed to go out. But a Buddhist monastery which is called a Vihara, which means simply the Dwelling or the Abode, is not like that at all.

Now the Bhikshu-sangha, the Buddha's order of monks, has a common rule which I know as the Patimokkha. And this Patimokkha is a list of a hundred and fifty **items** which are divided into five groups according to the seriousness of breaking the rules in each group, plus two other groups. I am not going into this in detail because it is not of much interest to ordinary people. But one enters the Sangha, the monastic order, one becomes a monk when one is ordained by a local Sangha or chapter consisting of at least five fully ordained monks including at least one Sthavira or elder. And the tradition is that one remains under tutelage as it were at least for five years if not for ten. Now at the time of ordination you are handed over to a senior monk who may be the one who presided at your ordination, it may be another, and you are supposed to remain with him as I say for at least five, preferably for ten years. And it is significant that only Sthaviras, only those who have been ten years in the order may act as teachers in this way.

Now the duties of the monk in Buddhism are manifold. First of all to study and practice the Dharma, the Buddha's teaching especially meditation. Secondly, to see an example to the laity. Thirdly, to preach and to teach. Fourthly, and this sounds a bit odd in the West but it is a very present reality in the East, to protect from unwholesome psychic influences. In the East, and in Buddhist circles also the presence or reality of psychic influences of various kinds is very strongly believed in; that there are occult forces abroad in the sort of psychic atmosphere which may be good - beneficial, or bad - harmful. And it is believed that the monks by their austerities, by their meditations, by their blessings can ward off these from ordinary people who might otherwise be affected by them. And in the East this is regarded as a very important service rendered by the Sangha. In the West of course this aspect of the monastic life is not nearly so prominent, you might almost say that it is non-existent. But historically, traditionally the monks do fulfil this function, do perform this role. And lastly but by no means least it is one of the functions of the monk to give worldly advice. Now, you find in the East that whenever things go wrong, whether you quarrel with your wife or whether your children are disobedient or whether you are short of money or whether you have got into some sort of scrape or difficulty, you go and tell the monk all about it and you ask their advice. And by mere virtue of the fact that they are detached from all these worldly things - they don't have any wives themselves or children themselves or anything else of that sort themselves - they can take an objective or detached sort of view (just as it is said that the spectator sees more of the game than the players) and they give usually quite constructive advice about these things. So this is one of the services, not only services its regard as one of the duties of the monk in Buddhist countries. For instance we know even on the day of the Buddha, the Buddha was once approached by a young man whose wife was a real terror. And the young man said, Look, I've been married only a few months but I feel like running away from it. She's just awful. So, the Buddha said, Alright, I'll come to your house and I'll see what I can do about it. So the Buddha was invited to the house by the young husband and he just sat there; had his lunch. But it was served ceremonially; she had to of course cook it and bring it. So afterwards the Buddha called her and he made the young husband and the wife sit down. And as the custom was he gave a sermon. And He said in the course of the sermon there are seven kinds of wives... I don't know whether you know this passage, it is really a quite interesting one; he said: There is the wife who is like a friend (I don't remember them all. I'll tell you as many as I do remember)... There is the wife who is like a friend. There is the wife who is like a mother. There is the wife who is like a thief. There is the wife who is like a master. There is the wife who is like a servant. And in this way He enumerated seven kinds of wife. And then He turned

to the young wife and He said very sweetly and very nicely, And which kind of wife do you want to be ? So the poor girl didn't know which way to turn so she bowed very humbly and said, I would like to be the wife who is like a servant. So after that, we are told, the young husband had no more trouble with his wife. [Laughter] This story should not be told to argue that the Buddha thought that the wife who is like a servant is the best kind of wife. No. He just put it before her and she herself decided. And in this way the Buddha helped the young man out of that scrape. So that we see in the Buddha's life, the Buddha's biography, he was always doing this sort of thing. So this is one of the functions of the monks, to give advice even about worldly affairs, worldly matters.

Nowadays in Buddhist countries there are two branches of the monastic order. What we call the Theravada branch which we find in Ceylon, Burmah, Thailand, Cambodia, Laos; and the Saravastivada branch which we find in Tibet and in China, in Vietnam and in Korea. There is very little difference between the way of life and the rules observed by the monks of these two great traditions. They have got the same Patimokkha, the same list of one hundred and fifty basic rules to be observed. Japan is rather a special case because although the Bhikshu or monastic ordination was introduced there some centuries ago it died out and was replaced by the Bodhisattva ordination and other ordinations of different kinds. While we are on the subject it should also be said that one must not confuse a Lama with a Bhikshu or a monk. Lama is a separate category. When people study Tibetan Buddhism they think a Lama means a monk, but it does not. A Lama means a spiritual teacher. He is usually a monk but not always, not necessarily so especially among the Nyingmapas and the Kagyupas.

Now, so much for the Sangha in the ecclesiastical sense of the monastic order.

Now, thirdly we come to the Maha-sangha, or the Great Sangha. And it is so called because it is great in respect of size. It is the Sangha which includes Ariya the Noble or Holy Persons; and Anariyas, as I have said, the not so holy; the monks and the laity, men and women; the whole Buddhist community on all levels, united by a common allegiance with the Buddha, common allegiance to the Dharma, common allegiance to the Sangha; all those people who take refuge in Buddha, Dharma and Sangha whatsoever they are, whosoever they are, they comprise, they make up the Maha-sangha or the Great Sangha. And this is the bond between them. There should also be the bond of what we call Maitri or Metta or Love, Loving-kindness which we try to develop in our meditation practice.

Now these are the three basic meanings of the word Sangha, the spiritual community. The Ariya Sangha, the community of those who, independent of space and time, share certain spiritual experiences and transcendental attainments. Then the Sangha in the more ecclesiastical sense of the order of monks, those who have devoted their whole lives or dedicated their whole lives to the cause of the Dharma. And lastly the Maha-sangha, the Great Sangha the whole Buddhist spiritual community, monk and lay, Ariya and Anariya, men and women and so on.

Now, this is the traditional understanding, the traditional explanation of what meant by Sangha or spiritual community. But before I close I would like to add just a few words about the introduction, one might even say the adaptation of the Sangha, the Buddhist spiritual community in this country, especially in the form of what we now call the Western Buddhist Order. About Ariya-sangha we cannot really say anything. This relates to spiritual attainments or transcendental experiences - these are not anything public, these are essentially private, one can have them anywhere whether among monks or among lay people, and so on. So in any formal scheme or organisational set up the Ariya-sangha does not come into consideration; this is on an altogether different plane.

But the Bhikshu-sangha and the Maha-sangha very definitely come into consideration.

So as I was explaining only last Sunday when we had our first anniversary seminar we had our first ordinations, in the Western Buddhist Order there will be, or rather there are four grades of ordination. First of all that of what we call Upasaka, the committed or dedicated lay brother or sister. One who remains in the world, who lives in the world who has a job wife, family and

so on but who is definitely committed to the Buddhist way life...practices meditation regularly, takes the three Refuges and supports the Buddhist spiritual movement in all possible ways. Then the second grade is that of the Maha-upasaka, the senior lay brother or lay sister who helps out with classes and lectures because they are more experienced, more knowledgeable than the ordinary lay brothers and lay sisters. They form the second category. The third category, those with Bodhisattva Ordination, Those who are in a sense sort of part time monks, who continue to live in the world, who still may even have jobs but who nevertheless are fully or practically fully committed to the Buddhist way of life and who function in. who exercise a sort of ministerial function as teachers. And in the fourth grade, the fourth category we ha the full timers, Buddhist monks of one kind or another.

So these are the four grades in or of the Western Buddhist Order. And it is these grades which make up, so far as our Buddhist movement in this country is concerned, the spiritual community in the more technical sense. And it is this spiritual community, this Western Buddhist Order which we hope and which we believe will be able to act as the nucleus of a really living Buddhist movement in this country. Perhaps in the course of the week, towards the end of the week, we shall have an opportunity of hear g the tape of that talk which I gave in detail last Sunday about the Western Buddhist Order and especially about the Upasaka or lay brother or lay sisters ordination. But we have to see this development against the total traditional bac ground and the traditional understanding of the Sangha on these three levels, s Spiritual Community, Ecclesiastical Community and then community in different ways of all the Faithful.

Let me conclude by quoting a verse from the Dhammapada, a collection of the Buddha's teachings in Pali. The Buddha says:

Sukho Buddham uppado,
Sukha Saddammadesena
Sukha Sanghassa samaggi,
Samagannam tarpo sukho. ‘

This means: ‘Sukho Budhanam uppado’ - Happy, Blissful is the arising of the Buddhas. If anyone gains enlightenment, if a Buddha is born if a Buddha comes into existence this is a happy thing it is for the good of the whole world, for the whole of humanity. ‘Sukha Saddammadesena’ - Happy, blessed or Blissful is the preaching of the true Law, the true Doctrine of the Dharma. This also is for everybody's benefit. ‘Sukha Sanghassa samaggi’ - Happy, Blissful is the unity, literally the Samaggi, the Same Pathedness, the Going the Same Way, of the Sangha, of the Spiritual Community, of the followers and disciples of the Buddha.’Samagannam tapo sukho’ - Such....it is usually translated ‘United spiritual effort’ but it is more than that. ‘Tapo’ literally means to burn, it is ‘heat’. And it means in Indian literature ‘asceticism’ or spiritual practice because it is like a sort of fire burning up all impurities. So this sort of firey, blasting spiritual practice, ‘Samagannam’, of those who are ted, Those who are following the same Path is ‘Sukho’, is blessed. So this what the Buddha has to say, very beautifully about the arising of the Buddhas, he enlightened ones; about the propagation of the Dharma, the Teaching; and about the unity and united practice of the Sangha.

Many of us, as some f you know, feel very strongly indeed that unless and until in this country there is a real, a genuine, a united spiritual community of Buddhists, not just a distant deal of Enlightenment, not even just a teaching, much less still just societies organisations in the ordinary sense, but unless and until there is a spiritual ornunity of people who are committed and dedicated and actually following the arth in varying degrees, unless in other words there is an Order, a Western Buddhist Order then there is no real future for the Buddhist movement in the West And this is why, as many of you know, we have just very recently established this Western Buddhist Order as the latest formulation along traditional lines of the Sangha, the Spiritual Community.

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