

## **Tape 8: Introducing Buddhism**

In a talk delivered to teacher-training students, Sangharakshita tells the story of the Buddha's life, shows that there is no place for God in Buddhism, and explains the Noble Eightfold Path to Enlightenment. An excellent general introduction to Buddhism.

(70 minutes - 1966)

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Perhaps I should begin with a few words about myself. I went out to India about 20, oh more than 21 years ago, and I remained out there uninterruptedly for just 20 years; mainly in India but also in Ceylon and Nepal, Sikkhim, Singapore and a few other places, but mostly in India. So when I came back to this country after being away for 24 years, not having paid any visit during that time, when I came back I noticed quite a number of changes. I don't suppose many of you are over 20 so you probably don't realise how very much this country has changed in the course of 20 years. When I came back, I must say (I don't want to go into details), I got quite a few surprises and even a few shocks at the changes which I saw. But there was one change which I welcomed very, very much indeed, one change which it gave me very great pleasure indeed to observe. When I was a boy, when I was at school in this country, hardly ever, if at all, did we hear any mention of any religion other than Christianity. We had Bible class, we had Religious Instruction, we had all that, but so far as I recollect not one of our teachers at any time any pronounced a name of any other religion, whether it was Buddhism or Hinduism or even Judaism or even Islam. We just were not even given to understand that that there were any such religions in the world. Now that certainly isn't so today. 20 years later, or even less than 20 years later, a very great change has taken place. And now it would seem that all over the country in schools and institutions of various kinds, people's minds are becoming more and more open; and though they may themselves be quite pious, even quite ardent, quite convinced Christians, or even people quite convinced in the truth, say, of Humanism or some other system entirely, they do have a great interest in learning something about other religions, whether about Buddhism or Hinduism or Islam or any other religious system. And this I feel is a very, very welcome development.

Formerly, in ancient times, the world seemed a very vast place. People living in one country were almost completely ignorant or how people lived in other countries. Now that isn't so today. Whether through books or through films, you are quite familiar with the way in which people live, say, in India, or China, or Australia, or New Guinea, or South America. All that sort of information is very, very easily available to you. So your mind becomes broader. You know much more about the culture, about the manners and customs and traditions of other countries than your forefathers did. You have a much broader and a much more cosmopolitan outlook. So it's only natural, indeed it's inevitable, that this development, this tendency, this great change should be extended also to the sphere of religion, that you should be interested in knowing not just your own faith, 'own' in the sense that it's the one that you were born into, but also the faiths, the beliefs, the religious practices of other people in other parts of the world. Despite many quite devastating setbacks from time to time, we can state I think, with some confidence, that as the years go by the human race is tending to become more and more one great family; more and more interconnected; even, we may say, more and more united. And perhaps the day will come when we see the development not only of a global government but of a global culture, even of global religious and spiritual aspirations. So we welcome therefore very much the development of this sort of tendency within the field of religious studies and religious interests.

I remember, when I was a boy, I was quite fond of poetry and especially of Tennyson and Browning at one time. And I remember there's one line of Browning which always struck me very forcibly, and that was: 'He knows not England who only England knows'. And I've certainly been

able to verify the truth of this as a result of my own experiences in India and other countries. When you know only your own country, your own customs, your own culture, you don't really know them because you've no standard of comparison. Knowledge, we may say, is essentially comparison. You come to know a thing, come to understand a thing by comparing it with another thing. If you know only one thing, you don't therefore even know that thing. So after spending 20 years in the East, I feel that I understand this country much better than I would have understood it had I remained here all the time. Because things I would have taken for granted I now see in comparison with different things of the same nature, of other countries, in a fresh, in a new light as it were. And I can appreciate and I can understand better and more deeply.

So it's just the same in the sphere of religion. One might say that you can't even understand your own religion except in relation to other religions. And this is one of the values, even for the religious person, of the study of other religions. Other religions even throw light upon your own. You may not abandon your own, in fact you may be more firmly, more securely anchored in your own as a result of studying other religions, because you come to know your own religion better by way of comparison and by way of contrast.

So the wider you can increase your scope, the more out of religions, and faiths and philosophy you can draw in and understand and appreciate, the deeper will become even your own religious understanding and religious faith. Therefore it is, I feel, a very good and a very healthy sign that you, who are if you're anything are Christians, perhaps of various denominations, should have taken up the study of other religions including Buddhism. Buddhists, as we'll come to see later on, are usually quite open-minded about other religions. They are quite willing to learn about and to learn from other religions; and if that sort of attitude, if that sort of tendency can spread among Christians also, if they can come to know something about Buddhism, then it's surely to the good and the benefit of both faiths.

Not so many weeks ago I had the opportunity of meeting someone about whom you might have heard, and that is the Bishop of Woolwich. I don't know whether you have heard of him, perhaps you have. He's rather well-known, if not notorious, because he's written, as you no doubt know, a book called 'Honest to God', in which he has made the point that the traditional image of God must go. And I met him, as I have said, a few weeks ago, and we had a long discussion lasting about two and a half hours, and we did feel at the end of it that we did have quite a lot in common. He's gone now to the United States to give some lectures, but just before we parted he said, "I look forward very much, after my return, to coming to see you at the Hampstead Buddhist Vihara". So we are expecting to have him along here, to see us and have another talk fairly soon. So this is the way in which things are developing nowadays. Even 20 years ago the idea of a Christian Bishop calling on a Buddhist monk at a Buddhist Vihara would have been almost unthinkable; or if thinkable, even quite shocking. But that isn't the case any longer. As the world grows smaller, people are drawn closer and ever closer together. So that's how you all come to be sitting here this afternoon: because your minds are broadened as a result of these developments I've been speaking about, and you've come to try to understand, perhaps to appreciate, something about Buddhism.

Now obviously in the course of these 40 or 50 minutes one can't say very much about a great Faith like Buddhism, with a very vast and complicated teaching, with a history of two-thousand-five-hundred years, many schools, many systems, many traditions, and so on. One can only give a very brief and very simple, and therefore very inadequate, summary in the hope that that will spark off some interest in you and that you will pursue that interest later on by yourselves.

Now the word Buddhism comes from the word Buddha. The Buddha is the Founder of Buddhism just in the same way that Christ is the Founder of Christianity. The word 'Buddha' isn't really a proper name. It's really a title, just as 'Christ' is also a title. 'Christ', as you probably know, means 'the Anointed One'. So in the same way, 'Buddha' simply means 'the One who knows' or 'the One who is Enlightened'; or it's sometimes translated also as 'the One who is Awake', 'the One who is Aware'. The idea being that most people are asleep, as it were, or dreaming at best; subject to all

sorts of illusions and delusions. And the Buddha, as we shall see later on, is one who has awoken from all those. So he's the Founder of Buddhism.

So let us just examine briefly the main facts of his life. You probably know already that the Buddha was an Indian, or perhaps not quite an Indian. He was born at a place called Lumbini, inside what is now Nepalese territory. You're students of history also, so you probably know that political boundaries fluctuate. So at present Lumbini is inside Nepal. A hundred years ago it was inside India; a hundred years before that, well probably it was back in Nepal again. But at present it is in Nepal, and the Buddha was born there roughly about 500 years before Christ. He was born into a rather aristocratic family. According to the traditions his father was a *Rajah*. *Rajah* has two meanings in this connection: one is a hereditary monarch, and the other is a sort of elected president of the clan or tribe. So it seems that the Buddha's father, when the Buddha was born, was serving a term, a twelve-year term, as the elected President or *Rajah* of the *Sakya* tribe. And their political organisation was republican. There were many little republics in North-eastern India in those days, and the Buddha was born under those circumstances. So he received, so far as we can tell, what passed in those days for a very good education. He was initiated into the various traditions, the various customs of the tribe, of the clan to which he belonged, which incidentally was a *Kshatriya* tribe, that is a warrior caste, tribe, and became skilled in all sorts of martial exploits, learned genealogy and history, and things of that sort. When he was about sixteen, he was married to one of his cousins, and not very long afterwards a son was born to them.

Now with this sort of background, it is quite evident, it is quite obvious, that from a worldly point of view there wasn't very much that the future Buddha really was in want of. He had social position. He had health. He had youth. He had a happy and contented family life. He was educated. He was cultured. So from a worldly point of view, he seemed to have, one might say, everything. But in spite of that, despite everything that he had, from a very early period it seems as though he was dissatisfied. It seems that he developed the habit of spending long periods by himself, in seclusion, and just trying to think. He wondered sometimes, "Well, here I am. But what's the meaning of it? Why is one born into this world at all? After death what happens? What's the meaning of life? What's the purpose of life?" These sort of questions started troubling him, even started disturbing, even started tormenting him. And some of the early scriptures put it in a very vivid sort of pictorial form, in the form of what some people regard as a legend, which may for all of that have actually taken place. We are told that on one occasion the future Buddha decided to go out from his palace on an excursion. So he called his charioteer, the horses were harnessed to his chariot, the charioteer whipped up the horses and off they went. So as they were spinning along, the future Buddha looked at the roadside, and there he saw tottering along a very old man. Now I don't know whether any of you have ever been to the East, but in the East, especially in India, an old man often looks very old indeed. Sometimes he may not be more than 50 or 60, but he looks almost a hundred. So the Buddha saw an old man of this sort; very thin, bony, bent, tottering along with a staff, just able to support himself; with white hair. So he was very much struck by this, because, according to this legend, the Buddha's father had secluded him from all unpleasant sights, wanted that he should only see beautiful things, beautiful people, and so on, and had carefully kept away all the old people. So the Buddha had never seen, we are told, an old man before. So he asked the charioteer, "What is this?" So the charioteer thought, "Well, now the moment has come", and he said, "Well this is an old man". So the Buddha said, "Well how did he become like this?" So the charioteer said, "Well it's natural, I'm afraid. Everybody becomes like this." Then the Buddha asked, "Well shall I become like this?" And the charioteer said, "Yes, even you, though now you are young, strong, healthy, even you one day will become like this, cast down with old age." So this utterance made the future Buddha very, very thoughtful. And he started thinking, "Well if youth ends in this, in old age, in this state of emaciation and suffering and weakness, what is the use of it, what is the value of it?" So very slowly and thoughtfully he turned back to the palace. And this is what is called The First Sight.

On a subsequent occasion, he went out and he saw another sight. This time he saw a sick man, lying at the side of the road, with an attack of fever or something of that sort, tossing this side and

that, with no one to care for him. And he asked the charioteer, "What is this ?" The charioteer said, "It's a sick man." And again the Buddha asked, "Well, am I likely to suffer in this way ?" And the charioteer said, "Yes, sickness is something which comes, we can't prevent it. It might come at any time, at any moment you or I or anybody else may be struck down with sickness. We have to suffer." This also made the Buddha very thoughtful and again he went back to his palace, thinking it all over.

So on the third occasion, when he went forth, he saw, being carried along on a sort of bier by the mourners, a corpse. Now in India, people don't put a corpse into a coffin. They just put a white sheet over it, and with the face exposed they carry it on an open bier through the streets, and everybody can see. So the Buddha saw in this way. So he said to the charioteer, "What is this ? Why are they carrying that man ? Why is he so stiff ? Why is he so quiet ? What's happened ?" So the charioteer said, "He is dead." And again the Buddha asked, "Well shall I come to this state, must I also die ?" And the charioteer said, "Yes. You must die. I must die. Your father must die. Everybody who is born must one day die. Life ends in death. This is an inexorable law. No one can avoid it. No one can escape it. Death is king of all." So this made the Buddha more thoughtful than ever, and he went back to the palace, plunged deep in thought.

But there was a fourth occasion we are told, when the Buddha went forth. And this time he didn't see an old man, or a sick man, or a corpse. He saw a living man walking along in a yellow robe, a saffron coloured robe. Now in India a saffron coloured robe is worn by those who give up domestic ties, give up social obligations, and who wander about devoting themselves to the search for Truth, trying to understand life. And they are supported on the alms of the people. People just call them, give them food, invite them to their houses, look after them. This is considered very meritorious and this is the system, even now, in India. Such people are called *sadhus*, which simply means 'good people'. So on the fourth excursion the Buddha saw one of these people, one of these *sadhus*, just walking along in a saffron coloured robe, with a begging bowl, shaven head; but he looked quite different from any of the other people the Buddha had ever seen. He was calm, quiet, contented, peaceful, serene. So the Buddha started thinking to himself, "Well, what is this ?" and he asked the charioteer, and the charioteer said, "He is one who has given up all worldly ties. He has no wife, no family, no domestic responsibilities, social or political obligations. He is solely concerned with the Truth." So this also made the Buddha very thoughtful and again he went back to his palace.

So in this poetic sort of way the story is told, whether we take it literally or not the meaning is clear. The meaning is that the Buddha, during his youth, was deeply impressed by the facts of old age, disease, and death; by the fact that this human life of ours is lived under these limitations. We may ignore them, we may overlook them, we may try to escape them or not to see them, but they are there all the time. So he realised this or came to realise this, and he also saw that perhaps there's a way of finding out, perhaps there's a way of penetrating behind the veil to the meaning and the mystery of it all. So we're told that after thinking all this over for a long time, the Buddha came to a decision. He decided that he would become a *sadhu*. He felt that these questions had to be answered. He felt that he couldn't rest until an answer was found. So he couldn't stay at home, he had to just get out, be free to search, to think, to meditate. So one night, we are told, he just left home, without anybody knowing, went out into the night, into the darkness, into the jungle, took off his princely robes, donned the saffron robe of a wandering monk - a *sadhu*, and set out in search of Truth.

Now we are told that he searched for quite a long time, for six whole years. He went from one teacher to another, learned what they had to teach; wasn't satisfied, found that the teaching took him only a certain distance but not to the ultimate goal, practised self-torture, self-mortification, asceticism, found that that also didn't work, then took up eventually, finally, the practice of meditation. So about six years after he left his palace, we are told, at a place in what is nowadays known as Bihar, in Bodha Gaya, he found a tree, afterwards known as the Enlightenment Tree, sat down beneath it and made a resolution: whatever might happen, until he'd gained Enlightenment,

the knowledge that he was seeking for, the understanding that he was seeking for, he would not leave that spot. This was the resolution he made. So day after day, night after night, he was plunged in thought, and we are told that eventually, on the full moon day of Wesak - that's the month of April to May - one night when he was very deep in meditation, he suddenly saw the solution, suddenly saw the answer as it were to the problem which had tormented him; not only just saw it, but perceived it, understood it, plunged into it, as it were became one with it, and realised it; and in this way became what we call the Buddha, the Enlightened or the Awakened One.

So after this great awakening, this great realisation, which took place at the age of 35, he spent 45 years wandering up and down the plains of North-eastern India, teaching and preaching to whoever would listen to him: princes, kings, peasants, housewives, merchants, monks, all sorts of people. And eventually he had collected a following, founded a *Sangha* or an Order, and eventually passed away at the age of 80, with his teaching, which we call the *Dharma* or Buddhism, well and firmly established. So this in very brief outline is the story of his life. There's much more that we could say about this life, about the Buddha himself, about his personality, his character, his attributes, virtues, and so on, but we've no time for all this.

One fact which I want to draw your attention to is this: that the Buddha, according to his own word, his own declaration, is simply an Enlightened human being. The Buddha comes into the world just as we come into the world. He's puzzled and perplexed by the mystery of life just as we sometimes are, and he struggles and he strives to find the solution just as we sometimes strive and struggle to find a solution to it all, to find some light as it were in the midst of the darkness. But he found, he discovered, whereas we are still groping, still looking. But the point to insist upon, and the point to remember, is that the Buddha, even after his Enlightenment, even after the consummation of his search, is an Enlightened human being. The Buddha did not claim to be God. The Buddha didn't claim to be an incarnation of God, or son of God, didn't claim to be someone sent by God, a prophet of God or a messenger of God. He claimed to be no more than a simple human being who, by his own human efforts, had realised the Truth and then, after realising it, proclaimed it to other human beings so that they might realise it by their own effort for themselves. So this is the most important thing that we have to realise about the Buddha.

In Hinduism, Krishna and Rama claim to be incarnations of God, or it's claimed on their behalf by their followers. Christ is believed to be the son of God. Mohammed is believed to be the messenger of God. The Jewish prophets are believed to be prophets sent by God, or inspired by God. But the Buddha, perhaps alone among the founders of the great religions, doesn't make any such claim. The Buddha simply says, "I am a human being who by my own human efforts have realised the Truth, become an Enlightened human being". So this, as I have said, is the first thing that we have to understand about the Buddha. Not of course that the Buddha is just an ordinary ethical teacher, like Socrates or Marcus Aurelius. In the eyes of the Buddhists, one who has realised the Truth, one who is Enlightened, is the highest of all beings and in the Universe there is no Being higher than an Enlightened human being. This is another fact which we have to understand.

Now a question which might arise in your minds - I know it arose in the minds of the other students who came hear earlier - a question which might arise in your minds is: Well, if the Buddha himself is not God, or incarnation of God, or messenger of God, or prophet of God, well what is his relationship to God? What sort of relationship is there between God on the one hand and the Buddha on the other? What is the place of God in Buddhism? This is the sort of question which very naturally will spring to people's minds in this country. Now the answer is an answer which may perhaps surprise you. It might even shock you. I remember last time I spoke, when we came to this part of the talk there were one or two little gasps from some of the young ladies in the audience, because the answer is that in Buddhism there is no place for God at all. Buddhism is one of those religions which we call non-theistic. Now this might come as news to you. You might be under the impression, you might have made the assumption that religion

is necessarily, automatically, by very definition as it were, theistic; that is, involving belief in a personal God, a supreme Being. If you look up the word in the dictionary, what will the dictionary tell you? Religion means 'a system of belief in worship of God, the supreme Being.

But the dictionary definition overlooks a very important fact, and that fact is that in the world religions are of many kinds. We may say that especially religions are of two kinds. If we look over the world, if we examine all the religions of the world, especially the greater ones, those with the most followers, the historic religions, we'll find that very broadly speaking they fall into two great groups. On the one hand, we have the theistic religions; on the other hand, the non-theistic religions.

Now what are the theistic religions? First of all of course, Christianity itself; then Islam and then Judaism; and some forms of popular Hinduism. These are all theistic. They all believe in one God. One God who is the Creator of the Universe, who rules the Universe, who is the father, as it were, of all mankind. Now on the other hand, you've got the non-theistic religions: that is Taoism and Confucianism in China, philosophical Hinduism, Jainism - another religion originating in India in about 500 BC - and also of course Buddhism, as well as the more philosophical forms of Hinduism. So all these faiths are non-theistic. They don't believe in a God, they don't believe in a supreme Being, a creator of the universe, at all. Now this fact alone, or the realisation of this fact alone, should serve to open our eyes a little, should serve to make our outlook broader, because usually people think that religion means, religion involves necessarily belief in God. We usually think if someone believes in God they are religious. If they don't believe in God, they're not religious. This is our simple equation. But really it isn't so. For the last so-many thousands of years in the world, there have been hundreds of millions of people altogether who have led meaningful religious and spiritual lives, made spiritual progress, even gained Enlightenment perhaps, without resort to this conception of a personal God. So if our study of comparative religion, if our study even of Buddhism alone, awakens us to this fact, this alone is of some value. Because instead of thinking that religion was invariably theistic we have come to understand there can be such a thing as non-theistic religion also.

Now a few minutes ago I spoke about the Bishop of Woolwich. Why is it that his book, 'Honest to God', has made such an impact? Why is it that it has pleased some people and outraged and shocked others? Because he says, simply, "God must go"

(side B):

..... one's efforts in this direction, seize the truth face to face, without any intermediate intellectual activity where pure spiritual faculty developed as a result of one's concentration and meditation. And that of course leads directly to Enlightenment, directly to Nirvana. So this is the Noble Eightfold Path. Every Buddhist is supposed to follow this Path, developing Right Understanding, the right emotional attitude, practising Right Speech, Right Action, Right means of Livelihood, Right Effort, Right Mindfulness, and finally Right Concentration and Meditation leading to Enlightenment or to Nirvana. So this is the Path, and the Buddha says very emphatically, "You must walk the Path yourselves." He says, "I've walked it for myself, but I can't walk it for you. You save yourself." He said, "No man can purify another. Purity and impurity depend upon one's own efforts, or lack of effort." So "Walk the Path yourself", self-help, this is one of the fundamental principles of Buddhism: you can do it yourself. That's why sometimes it is said, rather jokingly, that Buddhism is a do-it-yourself religion. Nobody can do it for you. So do it yourself, follow the Path, tread the Path yourself, with your own two feet. The Buddhas only show the way. The *Tathagatas*, the Buddhas, are like signposts. The signpost says, "20 miles to London" or wherever it may be. So the Buddha says, "Well, Noble Eightfold Path to Enlightenment, to Nirvana, you tread it yourself." He shows the way.

But Buddhism also says, if you make the effort, you can attain. Anyone who makes the effort can attain. It is not that there are some chosen few who can do it and others who can't. Everybody who makes the effort can obtain the same results. If you put your mind to it, anyone who is

present here today, this afternoon, if you put your mind to it, if you resolve that you are going to practise Right Understanding, Right Emotional attitude, Right Speech, and so on, well as time goes on you can make progress, you can grow gradually towards Enlightenment and Nirvana. You don't even need to call yourself a Buddhist. The main thing is, you must accept the principles and you must follow the practices, tread the Path. This is the main thing. If you do that, then infallibly you'll get the right results.

But at the same time, in Buddhism we say there is no compulsion. Buddhism always says, "Come and see for yourself". It's rather remarkable that in Pali, the *Dhamma*, that's to say the Buddha's Teaching, is called *Ehipassiko Dhamma*, the teaching which says *ehu* (which means come), *passiko* (which means see). Come and see for yourself. Don't accept on trust. Don't believe just because the Buddha tells you. Don't believe because I tell you. Believe because you understand, experience and verify for yourself; only for that reason. In one of the most remarkable passages in the scriptures, the Buddha says to his followers, "Oh monks, don't accept anything out of respect for me". He says, "Just as gold is tested in the fire, so test my words in the fire of your own spiritual experience". This is why, this is one of the reasons why, at least, we find in Buddhism a complete and a perfect tolerance. Buddhism says, Everybody must find out the Truth for himself or herself. Everybody must find their own Path. You can't force anybody else to follow your own Path. You must allow others the same freedom that you claim for yourself, freedom to grow, freedom to develop spiritually, in their own way. So therefore we find when Buddhists are in a majority in any country, they don't try to compel the followers of the minority religions to become Buddhists, they provide them with all facilities for the following of their own Faiths.

Some of you might know that Thailand is a Buddhist country. Well in Thailand, of course, the majority of people are Buddhists but the King has the title of 'Protector of all religions'. In this country of course, the Queen has the title of 'Defender of the Faith', which goes back to Henry VIII, for when he was given that title by the Pope, Faith meant the Catholic Faith. But they of course changed the Faith from Catholic, or at least Roman Catholic, to Anglican, but the King or the Queen still has that same title. But they're the defender of only one Faith, not of the others. But in Thailand, a Buddhist country, it's different. The King is the 'Protector of All Faiths'. So on any public occasion, when the King makes presents to the Buddhist monks, they of course get the lion's share because there are more of them, but presents and offerings are also made to the Christians, to the Hindus, and the followers of the other Faiths; not that the King believes in them, or follows them all, he's a Buddhist. But he recognises that he's King of the whole people. So the same respect that he shows to the Buddhists, to the Buddhist monks, he shows also to the representatives of other religions on public occasions. And this is the sort of spirit of Buddhists everywhere, and that's why we find in Buddhism no religious wars, no persecution, no crusade, no inquisition. These things are not found in Buddhist history at all; not even criticism, much less still abuse of other religions.

I remember when I was in Kalimpong, in North-eastern India, I came to know a lot of Tibetan Buddhists, especially many refugees coming freshly down from Tibet. And some of them, after coming down, would go to the bazaar and hear Christian missionaries preaching. So when they used to hear them preach, they would be very, very shocked. Some of them used to come to me and say, "What do you think we heard? We couldn't believe our ears. There was a missionary, Christian missionary in the bazaar, in the market place, and he was abusing Buddhists. He's a religious person". They say he's supposed to be a padre, a priest, but he's actually abusing another religion. For them this is something unthinkable. There's a rather humorous story in this connection which I told in the meeting the other day. One of my Tibetan students came to me one afternoon, and said, "I've made a great discovery." So I asked him, "What is that discovery?" He said, "You know, I didn't realise it before, but Christianity and Communism are the same thing". So I said, "What? The same thing? How do you make that out?" He said, "Well I've just been along to the bazaar and I heard one of the Christian missionaries. And he was abusing and attacking Buddhism, saying that what is this worship of images and bowing down to wood and stone and brass, and all that sort of thing, and do they think that the image can help them? And

when they pray to it, what can it do for them ? It's just wood and it's just stone. And the monks are all parasites, living on the fat of the land. They should be made to work, so on and so forth." He said, "When I was in Lhasa, I used to go to Communist meetings, they said exactly the same thing. The very words were the same", he said, "so it's quite clear, Christianity and Communism are the same." So this should give one much food for thought, when one goes about trying to proselytize in this way. When I came back to this country I was happy to discover, among other things, that that sort of attitude is becoming very, very rare, and some clergy, especially Anglican clergy, to whom I related the incidents were very, very sorry to think that there could be, even now, in the middle of the twentieth century, some Christian missionaries who are trying to recommend their Faith by running down the Faith of other people. This seems to be quite out of date. But unfortunately, here and there in the world, in places like India, you do get missionaries still adopting this sort of attitude, and speaking in this way. And one really can't imagine, unless one has had contact with Tibetan Buddhists, how much it shocks them to hear the follower of one religion running down another. It isn't that they are Buddhists and they don't like to be run down by a Christian missionary. If they heard even a Buddhist speaking in the same way about some other religion, they would feel it equally deeply. So this is something that the Tibetan Buddhist mind, in fact the Buddhist mind in general, can't understand. You may disagree with someone, you may think he's completely wrong, but you should at the same time treat his ideas with respect. If you argue, argue courteously, without heat, politely, coolly. Just try to convince him of your point of view, but don't abuse, don't criticise in a bad spirit. So this is the sort of attitude of Buddhists. And that's why, as I've said, in Buddhism we have had no religious wars, no persecution, no Spanish inquisition, no Index, or anything of that sort; always perfect freedom of religion, perfect tolerance, and always an effort to understand the point of view of the followers of other religions.

That of course brings us back to the point that we started from, so we've come as it were full circle. As I've already made clear I think, Buddhism originated in India. It died out there, for various reasons I won't go into now, after 1,500 years of history, but it's now extant all over the East and is very quickly, it seems, spreading to the West. There are Buddhist Movements in most of the European countries, in Germany and France, Hungary, Holland, Finland, Austria, and perhaps the biggest Movement of all so far, here in this country. Here of course the Movement is centred more or less upon London, where we have not only this place - the Hampstead Buddhist Vihara and its Sangha Trust and Sangha Association - but also the Buddhist Society at Eccleston Square, which is the oldest and probably the best known Buddhist organisation in the West as a whole. Since my return to this country, I have been very much impressed by the interest which has been shown in Buddhism. I get invitations from all over the place. One week I may be lecturing up in Glasgow, another week across at Bristol, and then a few days later up at Oxford or Cambridge; and then of course all the time, regularly here in London. So it is very encouraging to see this sort of awakening of interest. Not that we expect everybody to become Buddhists but at least we do expect, or we do hope, that as this world gets smaller and smaller, even those who are Christians will take interest in Buddhism and Hinduism, just as we hope those who are Buddhists will take interest in Christianity and in other Faiths also. In this way, we come to appreciate different points of view and to broaden our own minds; in other words, really to educate ourselves in the true sense. Not to be frogs in the well, but to be people with broad and liberal, truly catholic outlooks and attitudes. So this is, I believe, the spirit in which you've all come along this afternoon, and I hope that this visit to a Buddhist Vihara, and this experience of listening to a talk on Buddhism has been of some use, and some help and some value. I think you probably have a few minutes left. If there are any questions you would like to ask, anything not quite clear, then perhaps we would deal with them for a little while.

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