

19: The Approach to Buddhism

Today is the first talk in the series, our new series for the new year, entitled Introducing Buddhism. In the first talk which we had some two weeks ago we discussed the necessity of religion. And we saw that religion in the broadest sense representing we may say the achievement of what I then called, psychological and spiritual wholeness, is necessary for those who have become self-aware as the instrument of their higher evolution. And it is necessary only for those who have reached the point where that higher evolution begins or where in fact it can alone begin, the point of self-awareness. For others we may say, though this is perhaps rather unconventional, it isn't necessary or it hasn't yet become necessary.

Now last week we tried to give an answer to the question: why Buddhism? Assuming religion to be necessary in the sense in which I've already defined it as necessary, then why follow Buddhism in particular? Religion doesn't after all exist in the abstract, we speak very often in terms of Religion with a capital 'R' but really there's no such thing; all that you really have at all are concrete individual religions, and last week we saw that altogether there are eleven of these; that is counting only the major living religions of the world, not counting the dead ones, not counting those of minor importance even though they are still alive.

So the question arises when one has all these religions, when one is confronted by the richness of all this material as it were, what is the reason for choosing Buddhism, the teaching of the Buddha, in preference to all the rest? So last week as we pursued this inquiry we saw that very broadly speaking there are two groups of religions, the ethnic on the one hand and the universal on the other; the ethnic religions being those professed by certain ethnic groups, confined to a certain geographical area or limited to a certain race of people; and the universal being those which were not so confined and so limited, which were addressed to mankind as a whole irrespective of geographical location.

Now, our choice when we take up this question of choice of religion is obviously limited to the universal religions because in order to belong to an ethnic religion like Hinduism or Judaism one has to be born into it. So the universal religions to which our choice is in fact restricted are only three in number, these are of course Buddhism (in chronological order I'm giving them), Christianity, and Islam; these are the three great universal religions of the world. So for anyone who is seriously considering this choice of religion, in practice in effect his choice is limited to these three.

Now, these three themselves in turn fall into two groups, there's a theistic group and a non-theistic group; there is a group of those that believe in a personal god/supreme being, and a group of those that do not, who believe in some personal or supra-personal non-creative principle instead. Now it is a fact that what we may call the theistic idiom is no longer intelligible to a very large number of religious minded modern people; if one speaks this idiom one will no longer be understood by them. so we find that amongst the universal religions Buddhism is the only one which is non theistic; Christianity and Islam, the other two universal religions are theistic. So to that extent they appear as limited to many modern people who no longer speak or even understand the language of theistic religion. So we find that amongst this group of three universal religions Buddhism is the only one which is non theistic, which lays

down a complete system of ethics, psychology, meditation, metaphysics and so on but without any reference to any god or supreme being. So this as we saw is really the basic reason for its appeal, the reason above all other reasons why an increasing number of people in the West are taking to this particular teaching, this particular tradition, or this particular religion. The fact that it offers them what we may call a non theistic universal religion, something which they can follow, something which they can try to practice, something which speaks a language and idiom which is intelligible to them; and all the other reasons: that it teaches a comprehensive system of meditation, that it's tolerant and so on, all these other reasons although good in themselves and valid in themselves are comparatively secondary. The basic issue is this of non theistic universal religion.

So this is the primary answer to the question why Buddhism? Most people take it up basically, essentially or intrinsically for this reason because it is a non theistic universal system of spiritual self development. But having settled this question as we did last week another question arises in its place in turn. We've spoken in the first talk of religion as the instrument by means of which the self aware person pursues the course of what we called the higher evolution. So Buddhism of course answers to this description. Buddhism is also a religion or teaching or system which functions as an instrument by means of which the self aware person, the person who is spiritually alive, conscious of himself, of his spiritual destiny pursues the course of the higher evolution from unenlightened humanity right up to Enlightened humanity or Buddhahood. In fact we may even go so far as to say that Buddhism is in fact better adapted to such an end than any other spiritual teaching which is known to us.

But the question which arises is of how to make contact with it, assuming it is the instrument for this higher evolution, how is one to lay hold of that instrument? How is one to get a grip on it? How is one actually to make use of it as distinct from knowing about it or contemplating it or seeing pictures of it? Now for those who live in a Buddhist country, for those who happen to be born in say Japan, or in Tibet in the old days, in Ceylon or Thailand, this isn't a problem at all or certainly not a problem in the same degree or to the same extent. So that in these countries whether or not people actually practice it Buddhism is always available, it's always laid on as it were, it's always at hand; if you want to meditate well, certainly within a few miles from your home you'll find a vihara, a monastery where you can do that; if you want to study the Buddhist scriptures again, within a few miles of your home wherever you may happen to be, in any of these Buddhist countries you'll find some learned monk who's capable of instructing you. Or if you're troubled by the deeper questions of religion and the spiritual life, the profounder, more far reaching questions well the chances are that in your country or in your district there are at least a few people, a few monks, or even a few lay people who have plumbed and fathomed, comprehended these questions for themselves, and who therefore can deal with and satisfactorily answer your questions and your difficulties.

So there in these Eastern Buddhist countries the situation is quite different; making contact with Buddhism, laying hold of the instrument, this doesn't represent a problem or a difficulty at all. But in the West, including this country it's a very different story. We may know Buddhism from books, but broadly speaking we've no contact with Buddhism, with the Buddha's teaching as an actual way of life or as a culture, no contact at all. Sometimes even one has, in this country and even more so in some of the other European countries like Finland

or Italy or Hungary where there are just a very very few Buddhists indeed, no real contact even with other Buddhists. One becomes very much aware of this fact in the course of one's work in this country; every now and then one meets people or one receives letters from people who tell one that they've been Buddhist or considered themselves as Buddhists for a long time: quite a long time, even for a matter of years; but then they say or they write that they've never met another Buddhist. Perhaps in isolation for years, occasionally one meets people of this sort at the summer school, I met two or three of them only last year at the summer school, and they said this is the first time we've had contact with other Buddhists, and they said it's quite impossible to convey what that means to us.

I can say that many years ago this was my own individual case for a couple of years, and some of you might even have had a similar experience. In my own case (if you don't mind me reminiscing autobiographically for just a few minutes), in my own case I became a Buddhist or considered myself a Buddhist at the age of about sixteen, so I got started pretty early. I came to this realization as one can say that I was a Buddhist after reading two very important Buddhist texts; one was the Diamond Sutra or Vajracheddika Sutra, and the other was the Sutra of Wei Lang as in our ignorance we used to call it in those days (now I understand one has to call it the Sutra of Hui Neng or the Platform Sutra), in those days we simply called it the Sutra of Wei Lang.

So what happened was, when I got hold of these two works, when I went through them, I went through them very quickly, in any case they're very short books, 'though very profound, very concentrated in content, I had a sort of experience, a sort of intuitive apprehension one might say that this is the truth, that so far one has not come across, or one has not come into contact with anything which surpasses this or even approaches this, that the truth is here, not truth in the sense of a particular set of words, a particular set of teachings or doctrines even, but truth in the sense of some metaphysical, some transcendental dimension which suggested by the words or hinted at by the thoughts and ideas and teachings which essentially was beyond them all but nevertheless in some way communicated or mediated by them.

So one felt, or I felt that this is the truth, the absolute truth. Not only that but there was also the experience or the if you like intuitive understanding or realization that this is nothing new; it is not that I didn't know it yesterday and now I've come to it today- not that - but when it was known it was as though (or one shouldn't even say as though), it was in fact that it had been always known; not that one got to know it then before one didn't know it and afterwards one did know it but when one knew it one not only knew it but one had always known it, so in fact there was no coming to know it. So in this sense also there's no question of becoming a Buddhist, not that up to the age of sixteen one wasn't a Buddhist one was something else, and from the age of sixteen one was a Buddhist, not that, but at that time one realized that one had in fact been a Buddhist in a sense without knowing it all the time. So this was my own experience. Now this happened in London but I didn't learn of the existence of a Buddhist movement in London 'till considerably later, and this occurred when I happened to be reading a translation of the Tao Te Ching: a certain Chinese Taoist work, and at the back there was an advertisement for a magazine called *Buddhism in England*. *Buddhism in England* is now known as *The Middle Way*, It is of course the organ of the Buddhist Society at Ecclestone Square. So after seeing this advertisement I wrote off for this magazine, got it, became a

subscriber, and entered into correspondence with the editor who was then Clare Cameron who is still alive, still in this country and still in touch with me, and in course of time I started writing articles for *The Middle Way* or rather Buddhism in England, the first of them being I remember on the subject of the unity of Buddhism, a subject which I've pursued with some enthusiasm ever since. Now eventually I plucked up my courage, went along to the society (it was then in Great Russell Street, now there's a bookshop on that same premises), joined the society and started attending meetings. So during those two years, from the time of reading the Diamond Sutra and the Sutra of Wei Lang, up to the time of going to the society at Great Russell Street, although all this happened twenty five years ago I wasn't in contact with a single other Buddhist.

Now there have been many changes since then in the Buddhist movement in this country and here in London, but I know that there are still quite a number of people in the position which I described, especially people living outside London, far away in what we Londoners call the Provinces. So very often this question of the approach to Buddhism often does constitute a very real problem; how to get in touch, how to make contact. For us who are in or have been in a number of years it seems obvious well you just come along and you join, but for someone who has never heard of the existence of a society, doesn't know where or how to begin looking it is a very real problem indeed.

Only the other week in this very place, in this vihara, a young man from the provinces came along, and he told us that he had been interested in Buddhism for about a year, he had written us one or two letters, but he'd had no contact with any other Buddhist, never even met, never even seen any other Buddhist. So it was a great relief to him apparently to talk to someone about Buddhism, to be actually able to speak this word Buddhism, to discuss Buddhism with other people who were also Buddhists. So it seems to us we were saying that very ordinary things, answering very elementary questions, but so far as he was concerned apparently, all these comparatively trite or comparatively commonplace remarks of ours, mainly in answer to his questions were in fact pearls of wisdom; and one started wondering what is it that I am saying because this person is receiving it so gratefully and so appreciatively. Whereas it doesn't seem as though one is saying very much at all. And in the course of conversation he happened to say to a young man who had opened the door to him, he said "don't you know, you're the first Buddhist that I've ever seen in my life". So there was this sort of historic occasion. So this is also a sort of warning to us. It shows us how very careful we must be; we may be at any time the first person, or the first Buddhist person that somebody else has ever seen. Now one has to be very careful therefore, especially when one is at the vihara. Because there may come a knock on the door, and you may go to open it, and you don't know who is standing there; it might be someone who has become interested in Buddhism, who has plucked up courage to come and knock on the door of the vihara and make a few inquiries; and it may be that of all his subsequent career, whether he becomes a Buddhist in the end or not or takes interest or not is determined by the face, by the appearance, by the approach, by the response of the person who opens the door. And that might be you any time.

If you open it with a smile then at least that makes an initial good impression. If you open it with a frown, supposing you're having a nice little chat down in the kitchen, and then there's this knock on the door and you feel 'what a nuisance, what on earth is that', so you rush up

and open the door with a bit of a scowl: 'what do you want?' Well what sort of effect does that produce? The person may not come again. In fact some months ago or more than a year ago we did have one or two cases of this sort I'm afraid, and people well they did come again but they told me the reception the first time they came. the expression on the person's face who opened the door wasn't really very encouraging and I might not have come again.

So it shows us that all the time we must be very very careful indeed and as we go about, as people get to know, as the subject of religion comes up, and we say perhaps with much hesitation, with a certain amount of bashfulness 'well you know I am interested in Buddhism' you might even say 'well I am a Buddhist' (might as well be hung for a sheep as for a lamb), that it may very well be that the person to whom you are speaking has never seen a real live Buddhist before. That is assuming of course you are a real live Buddhist and not a dead and stuffed one!

So it's something that really deserves some really serious thought and attention. The course of someone's whole spiritual life can be affected, for better or for worse by this impression of you, your knowledge, your sincerity and so on at that particular moment.

Anyway this is somewhat of the nature of a digression, so let us get back to this main question of the approach to Buddhism. Let's discuss it to begin with in very general terms, and after that towards the end if we have time (I'm not quite sure whether we shall have) we shall discuss it with specific reference to conditions here in this country. Now it's possible to approach Buddhism in very many different ways, and some of these ways are more adequate than other ways, a few are even positively wrong. what we have to do in the first place is to approach Buddhism as Buddhism. Now what does one mean by that? It surely seems obvious enough that one should approach Buddhism as Buddhism. But it isn't really so, we don't always do that; in the course of the first talk religion was defined as the achievement of a state of spiritual and psychological wholeness, and in that state relating to others, to other people and to Reality, Ultimate Reality.

Religion is also the sum total of all the doctrines, all the teachings, all the methods conducive to this particular achievement, so Buddhism reflects this definition. Perhaps it reflects it more purely and more clearly, in a less distorted form than any other teaching. In its own language Buddhism is the Way to Enlightenment, it's the raft, or the Dharma is the raft to carry us over to the other shore of Nirvana, perfect peace of mind, freedom, Insight, wisdom, compassion and so on. Or in more modern terms Buddhism or the Dharma is the instrument as I've already said of the higher evolution of mankind, the evolution of mankind, each individual human being that is to say from unenlightened to an enlightened state or condition of supreme Buddhahood.

So unless one understands this, to begin with, this above all, one cannot really approach Buddhism, one can hardly really begin to approach it; one may approach something or think that one is approaching something but that will not be Buddhism; at best it will be a rather serious, rather unfortunate distortion of Buddhism.

Now let me give you just one or two examples of this. From time to time at the vihara here we have the pleasure and privilege of receiving visitors from different Buddhist countries.

Sometimes from Thailand sometimes from Burma, Japan, Tibet and so on. And some months ago we had a very charming visitor from Japan. He was a Shin Buddhist priest, that is of the Shin sect, quite a prominent figure in the religious life, the Buddhist life of his own country; and he was on a world tour. So he naturally called on us, called on the Buddhist Society, and in the course of conversation he said to me 'I must tell you about something which pleases me very much', he said 'on my way from Japan to London I called in at various places and amongst others I called in at Rome', and he said 'not only did I call in at Rome but I had the honour of an audience with the Pope', he said 'not only that but the Pope gave me a letter, and in this letter he expressed very high appreciation of Buddhism'. Now when I heard this to be quite frank I became a bit suspicious. I felt 'well the Pope expressing high appreciation of Buddhism, doesn't sound quite Pope-like to me' so I said 'Have you any objection if I see this letter?' So he was delighted to show it to me, he produced it out of his briefcase; it was on a beautiful big thick piece of parchment like paper with a coat of arms, an enormous magnificent coat of arms embossed at the head, and it was in fact by the pope or from the pope, though rather interestingly It didn't actually carry his signature, it was just on his letter head his embossed official letter head. And he did indeed speak about Buddhism and he did express a certain appreciation; and the good Japanese priest read it out beaming, and the pope had written that 'Buddhism is to be commended because it's an excellent human teaching', 'an excellent human teaching'; now to anyone who know a little of Catholicism, a little orthodox Christianity it's very clear what this means. There are two kinds of religion, revealed religion and natural religion; transcendental one may say, and merely humanistic. So Buddhism is neatly classified as a human teaching, it's a product, it's a teaching of just a man; not of any really religious figure, not of a saviour, not of a son of God certainly but just an ordinary human being. So it's quite good on that level, in other words it's just a system of ethics nothing more than that, not capable of leading one to salvation.

So the Japanese priest didn't quite get this because he wasn't quite familiar with Western thought, Western culture or with Catholicism in particular, he thought that Buddhism was being praised and appreciated in being described as an excellent 'human teaching', he didn't realize that it was being undermined and depreciated.

So one finds that if one takes up books on Buddhism written by orthodox roman catholics this is the general line about Buddhism which is being taken, that yes Buddhism is very good, it's very fine, it's very noble but it's a human creation, it's not part of revelation and therefore it cannot really conduce to salvation, you can't get liberation through Buddhism. I remember one of these writers after a quite scholarly survey of certain Buddhist teachings, he ends up his book on the very last page, the paragraph by saying 'what a pity, all these millions of people embark on this raft of the Dharma of Buddhism, millions of people, and the raft simply founders and all go down with it, what a pity'. So this is the sort of official attitude among roman catholics including those who write about Buddhism, they don't regard Buddhism as a way to Enlightenment, in other words they don't approach it on its own terms, therefore there can be no real understanding of Buddhism, there can be only a distortion of Buddhism. One may say there can't be any genuine approach, unless one approaches Buddhism as a way to Enlightenment; if one doesn't do that there's just a very learned, very scholarly missing of the mark.

Now the roman catholics aren't the only offenders by any means, I've just given one example;

one might cite also the example of the Hindus. In the course of many years spent in India I've come up against this very very often; the Hindus also, especially orthodox Hindus, particularly the Brahmins have very great difficulty in approaching Buddhism as Buddhism. As soon as you mention Buddhism to them (this has been my experience literally thousands of times), you just mention the word Buddhism and they say at once without waiting for another word on the subject 'oh yes it's just a branch of Hinduism, only a branch of Hinduism' it's very significant they always use the word 'only' and sometimes I ask 'why can't you say it's a branch of Hinduism, why say only a branch?' You see this little word only at once gives you a clue that the whole idea is one of depreciation or limitation. So one finds even quite good Hindu scholars taking a look at Buddhism, sorting out certain doctrines, and finding certain doctrines are not found in Hinduism (certain doctrines of Buddhism); so they say 'well these can't be part merely of Buddhism at all, Buddhism is just a branch of Hinduism it's a part of it no difference at all'; so if there are any doctrines in Buddhism that are not found in Hinduism then these are corruptions which have been introduced by the designing Buddhist monks. And this is what they state explicitly in some of their works. For instance the anatman doctrine, the Buddha's doctrine of non self; anatmavada or anatavada. Some Hindu scholars even Dr Radhakrishna try to argue quite seriously that the Buddha did not teach this, this was the invention of the monks later on; the same with the nontheistic attitude of Buddhism. Some even go so far as to try to argue the Buddha did in fact believe in god but he didn't like to tell his followers he didn't believe in god because it might upset them. So some scholars have actually seriously put all this down in scholarly works.

So this is just an example, another example of the way in which Buddhism is distorted because people are not willing not ready to approach Buddhism simply as Buddhism; so if we want really to understand it really to approach it, Buddhism has to be approached as Buddhism; you have to understand essentially it's a means to psychological and spiritual wholeness, it's a way to enlightenment, it's the instrument as I've called It of the higher evolution; unless we understand this we won't really be able to approach Buddhism at all, we may approach something as I've said but it won't be Buddhism, it'll just be our own distorted version of it, our own subjective interpretation; not your objective truth about Buddhism itself.

The culmination of this sort of approach, approaching Buddhism as Buddhism is of course what we call the Going for Refuge. Going for Refuge to the three jewels or three gems, that is to say the Buddha, the enlightened teacher, the Dharma or the way to enlightenment and the Sangha, the community of those who side by side are walking that way or path leading to enlightenment. Now I've often spoken about the three jewels or the three refuges so there's no need for me to expatiate on this subject today. But even if one doesn't take the step of actually going for refuge to the Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha; even if one doesn't go so far as that, one should at least very seriously ask oneself whether one does regard Buddhism as the means to enlightenment, the instrument of the higher evolution or whether we have any other idea or lack of ideas about it. We should ask ourselves as it were that are we coming here, are we coming to this place; are we coming to this vihara and trying to learn about Buddhism with this understanding; that we're trying to approach something which is a way to Enlightenment, trying to lay hold of the instrument of our own individual higher evolution from a non enlightened to an enlightened state. This is the question which we should ask ourselves Now we come to another very important even crucial point; it is not even enough to approach Buddhism as Buddhism, that's good but it isn't enough; we have to approach Buddhism as a

whole. Buddhism is a very ancient religion as you know, it has behind it already 2500 years of history, 25 old centuries; during this time especially during the earlier part of this period it overspread practically the whole of Asia, the whole East, and in the course of these centuries as it overspread these vast areas of the globe it underwent a process of continual transformation and development and adaptation of its fundamental doctrines to the different conditions and needs of people in the midst of which it found itself, and in this way many different schools, many different traditions came to be founded, came to be established.

And historically speaking we may say Buddhism is all of these. Buddhism represents this whole vast development taking place in the course of 2500 years all over Asia. Now I've no time for details this evening but broadly speaking we can say there are in the world three major forms of Buddhism. In the first place we've got what we may call South east Asian Buddhism, the Buddhism of South east Asia; this is current in Ceylon, in Burma, in Thailand, Cambodia and Laos, and a few other places. This form of Buddhism is based on the Theravada Pali canon, that is the version of the Buddhist scriptures in Pali handed down by the Theravada, the school of the Elders, one of the most ancient of all the schools of Buddhism. So this is the first, South east Asian Buddhism.

Secondly there is Chinese Buddhism; this includes Japanese Buddhism, Korean Buddhism and Vietnamese Buddhism; all of these at least in their early stages were offshoots of Chinese Buddhism. Chinese Buddhism and all the subsidiary Buddhisms, Chinese Buddhism is based on the Chinese tripitaka or three treasures, the collection in Chinese of the translations of all the available Indian Buddhist scriptures, of all schools, Mahayana, Sarvastivada, Sautrantika and so on.

Then thirdly there's Tibetan Buddhism; including the Buddhism of Mongolia, Bhutan and Sikkim; this form of Buddhism is based on two great collections of canonical works, or canonical and semi canonical works the kandra or translated word of the Buddha, and the tandra, the translated commentaries by the great acharyas the great Buddhist philosophers and spiritual teachers.

So these are the three great major forms of Buddhism at present extent in the world, South east Asian Buddhism, Chinese Buddhism, and Tibetan Buddhism; and all these three are offshoots of Indian Buddhism, or branches of the original trunk of Indian Buddhism. South east Asian Buddhism we may say, represents the first phase of development of Indian Buddhism, the phase lasting from about the parinirvana or death of the Buddha up to about the beginning of the Christian era, a period of five hundred years; this is what we call the Hinayana phase of development, where Buddhism is stated predominantly in ethical and psychological terms. Now Chinese Buddhism represents Indian Buddhism in its second phase of development; that is it represents a sort of amalgamation of Hinayana plus Mahayana, that is Hinayana plus the more devotional and metaphysical developments or expressions or manifestations of the Buddha's teachings. This phase lasted very roughly from about the time of the origins of Christianity up to about 500 AD. Then Tibetan Buddhism, Tibetan Buddhism we may say, represents the third phase of development of Buddhism in India, the phase lasting very roughly from about 500-1000 AD or a little longer than that. And this is of course Hinayana plus Mahayana plus what we call Vajrayana or yogic and symbolically ritualistic Buddhism

about which I have spoken sometimes in connection with the Buddhism of Tibet.

Now all three forms of Buddhism, all these three major forms; South east Asian, Chinese and Tibetan, all these forms contain or include numerous schools and sub-schools. In South east Asian Buddhism the differences are largely national, that is Sinhalese Buddhism differs from Burmese Buddhism, Burmese Buddhism from Thai Buddhism and so on; although there are also individual sects or schools within each particular country, as in Thailand they've got two major sects, the Mahanikaya and the Dharmayutanikaya, we need not go into that. In Chinese Buddhism there are very many sects indeed or schools, like the Tien Tai, the Hua yen, the Chan school usually known as Zen and so on, altogether perhaps about one dozen important schools. Japan too has schools of its own which it developed quite independently of Chinese influence, especially the Shin school and the Nichiren school.

In Tibet of course we've got the Gelugpas, the Nyingmapas, the Karguppas, Shakyapas and so on. Now I'm not going into any details here and I'm mentioning all these names rather rapidly just to give you an idea of the richness of the content of Buddhism; all these schools, all these teachings, all these different sorts of adaptations, all these applications of the central fundamental principles. And when we approach Buddhism we approach all of these; we approach Buddhism as a whole; we don't approach just this one school or that one school, we approach the whole and the total Buddhist tradition as it developed over 2500 years, over practically the whole of Asia in all those different countries. We certainly don't treat one particular school of Buddhism as though it was in fact identical with the whole Buddhist tradition, or was in fact the whole Buddhist tradition. Unfortunately this is sometimes done. One can sometimes read books about Buddhism in which one can sometimes read statement like this, (I'm just selecting a few at random); in an introduction to one particular book on Buddhism I found this particular statement:

The Buddhist scriptures are to be found in the Pali tripitika.

Now if one examines that carefully it's not correct. One can say the Theravada Buddhist scriptures are to be found in the Pali tripitika, that's quite correct, but if one says Buddhist scriptures, then one is leaving out of consideration the Chinese canon, the Tibetan canon and several other minor canons also. So here one is regarding the Pali canon with the Buddhist scriptures as a whole. Which is a mistake. In another little pamphlet I found this statement:

Buddhism teaches salvation by faith in Amitabha.

Well it's quite true that the Shin sect teaches this or the Shin school of Japanese Buddhism, but it isn't quite correct, in fact it isn't at all correct to say 'Buddhism' teaches this; that is attributing to Buddhism as a whole what is the teaching of one particular school; in other words one is identifying the school with Buddhism as a whole, which is incorrect. In another book or rather booklet I found this statement:

The Dalai Lama is the head of the Buddhist religion.

Well the Dalai Lama is certainly the head of the Tibetan branch of the Buddhist religion, he's

the head of Tibetan Buddhism but he isn't the head of the whole Buddhist religion. So here again one is confusing the part, that is to say Tibetan Buddhism, with the whole, that is Buddhism itself, the total tradition.

So in all these quotations which I've cited the part is mistaken for the whole, and one makes a statement allegedly about Buddhism which is true really of one particular branch of Buddhism, one particular school, even one particular sect or line of tradition. So in all these cases a part is mistaken for the whole. So one should not approach the part thinking that one is approaching the whole, in other words one's approach to Buddhism should be not a sectarian approach, it should be a synoptic approach; one should approach the whole Buddhist tradition. Whole in time and whole in space; and try to include, comprehend, understand and fathom the essence of it all, not just of one particular aspect or one particular part.

Now one's approach to Buddhism should also be balanced; this is another very important, another almost crucial point. Now what does one mean by balanced. Human nature we know has got very many aspects; we need not develop this theme particularly, emotional aspects, intellectual aspects; some people are more introvert, others more extrovert. In this way there are so many differences. These differences are represented incidentally as many of you know by the formula of the five spiritual faculties which have to be kept in balance; that faith and wisdom representing the emotional and intellectual, and then again meditation and energy, representing the introvert and extrovert, all balanced by mindfulness or awareness which is the equilibrating faculty in man. So Buddhism should be approached in all these ways; one shouldn't have just an emotional approach or just an intellectual approach, or just a meditative approach or just a practical or active approach. One's nature comprehends all these aspects; one feels, one thinks, one acts; one also sometimes sits still; there are all these aspects.

So one should approach Buddhism as it were with all these aspect or through all these aspects, that is to say with one's total being; not just with a part of it, not just trying to feel and not think or understand it; not just trying to understand but not to feel. Not just all the time looking within never looking without, and on the other hand not always looking without and never pausing to look within; there's a time and place for all these things. If possible we should try to do all of them all of the time. As we ascend higher and higher in our spiritual development we shall tend more and more to do all of these all the time, to think and to feel, to act and not to act simultaneously; it sounds impossible but that's only because of the limitations of our present way of thinking; eventually as one's spiritual life develops all these four, apparently contradictory are sort of fused and harmonized into one spiritual faculty, one being as it were which is forging ahead. So unless one has this sort of balanced approach of head and heart, there's no real commitment one can say, no real dedication to Buddhism as a way of enlightenment, as an instrument of the higher evolution; so long as only a part of oneself is involved and not the whole of oneself.

Now so much for the approach to Buddhism in very general terms. Briefly to summarize, we should in the first place approach Buddhism as Buddhism, as way to enlightenment, as instrument of higher evolution, not on any other terms; otherwise we can't possibly begin to understand it or approach it. And secondly we should approach it as a whole, not approach

just the Theravada or just Zen, or just Shin or just Tibetan Buddhism, but taking in, comprehending even trying to assimilate the best elements of all these traditions, all these schools; approaching Buddhism as a whole. And lastly approaching in a balanced manner with the whole of our being, not just with this particular aspect or that particular aspect, this part or that part, head or heart but with both in fact with all, our total being.

Now I had intended when I started preparing these notes to say something about the approach to Buddhism with regard especially to conditions in this country, here in England especially as regards our Buddhist movement in London where we may say the Buddhist movement is in fact centred; but this is a very big subject and we don't have time to go into it this evening; this evening as it so happens I have another engagement on the other side of London, a somewhat important one to which I don't wish to be late; so I therefore concluded that it might be better to confer the consideration of this aspect of the subject to next week when we shall in any case be considering as you already know I hope from your programmes, Buddhism in England.