

Lecture 20: Buddhism in England

Sangharakshita

Friends. As most of you know, today's is the fourth in our new series for the new year, 1966, entitled *Introducing Buddhism*. Now before taking up today's subject which is *Buddhism in England*, I shall just briefly recapitulate the content of the previous three talks, partly to remind those who were present for them, and partly, to inform, those who have not previously attended. After going through them briefly in this way, we shall know exactly where we stand at the beginning of this evening's talk.

Now in that first talk of this series, the question was posed, and this was the title of the talk *Is Religion Necessary?* A very important question, one which people very often ask, and we saw in the course of the talk, that religion was necessary in a certain sense: it was necessary for those who had attained a certain degree of self-awareness, and it was necessary for them as the instrument of what we then called their *higher evolution* - that is to say their evolution from an unenlightened state to the state of enlightenment, or Buddhahood, or complete spiritual freedom. Religion we saw was not really for others, that is not for those who are not self-aware, not for those who do not wish to pursue and follow, the course of the higher evolution.

Now in the course of the second talk, the question was asked *Why Buddhism?*. Assuming religion to be necessary, for the sort of people that we've described, well why Buddhism? Why not some other system, some other teaching. We saw in that talk that there were eleven major religions in the world living today. I don't need I think to mention them all individually now, but we did see in the course of that talk, that out of the eleven major religions, eight were what we call ethnic religions, confined to a particular ethnic, racial, linguistic group, and only three of those religions out of the eleven were universal religions, religions whose message was aimed at all men and all women, regardless of nationality, race and so on. We further saw that among the universal religions, the three universal religions, there was a theistic group, and a non-theistic group. The theistic group comprising Christianity and Islam, the non-theistic group comprising simply Buddhism. We saw therefore, or we came to the conclusion therefore that Buddhism was the only non-theistic universal religion, and we saw therefore that that was the basic reason why most of us in this country accept and follow Buddhism. The language of theism has become meaningless to many of us. We require some kind of religion as the instrument of our own higher evolution, having developed a certain degree of self-awareness. The ethnic religions are not available, are not even accessible to us; among the universal religions, two are ruled out on account of their theistic background, and the only one that remains therefore is Buddhism. In this way, we answered, or attempted to answer the question of *Why Buddhism?*

Now last week, in the third talk of the series, we considered the whole question of the approach to Buddhism. And we saw that that approach, or the making of that approach was by no means an easy matter here in the West, in view of the fact that Buddhism is so recently established, and in view of the fact that we have hardly any contact with it if any at all as a living thing, as a living religious and cultural tradition. We saw however, that when we approach Buddhism, we should be careful to approach it in the first place as Buddhism, not as anything else; as a way to enlightenment, as the instrument of our own higher evolution. Not as just a humanistic teaching, not as just an ethical system, not as just an anthropological curiosity, but as above all else, the way to enlightenment, the way to Buddhahood, or the goal,

the summit of our own higher evolution, the higher evolution in fact, of the whole race.

Secondly we saw, that we should approach Buddhism as a whole. In Buddhism there are so many schools, so many sects, traditions; teachings: Theravada, Mahayana, Zen, Tibetan Buddhism and so on. So when we approach Buddhism, we should approach Buddhism as a whole, not approaching merely the Theravada, not approaching merely Tibetan Buddhism, or only Zen, but taking the whole Buddhist tradition in its length and its breadth, with its history of 2500 years, in all its richness, in all its diversity, its Indian, its Chinese, its Tibetan forms, and studying, distilling what is good out of each and every aspect, every strand even, of that tradition. And in the third place we saw that we should approach Buddhism with our whole being: not just intellectually, as people often do in the West; not just emotionally as they often do in the East; but intellectually and emotionally, with our intellect and with our feelings too; practically and theoretically, with our whole being, totally, without any reservation, without any little portion or any little corner of ourselves, which is left as it were, uncommitted to Buddhism. So we saw therefore, last week, in last week's talk, that we should approach Buddhism in this manner: approach it as Buddhism approach it as a whole; and approach it with our whole being. So this is the approach to Buddhism in general terms; very general terms, even we may say in the most general terms an approach which holds good at all times and in all places.

But there's also a more specific, even we may say, a more concrete approach to Buddhism. That is to say, an approach to it in terms of conditions here and now in this country, in the midst of this 20th century. And that brings us of course to the subject of today's talk which is *Buddhism in England*. Now the question may be put as to why as part of a series *Introducing Buddhism* we have to consider, or should pause to consider this question of Buddhism in England at all? Some people might remark, 'Well, why not get straight on with the exposition of Buddhism; why not get straight onto the philosophical first principles; why not get onto the spiritual and ethical path; why is it we have paused to consider something apparently irrelevant even though of interest like *Buddhism in England*. Why not get straight on, as I've said, with the exposition of the Dharma, of the Buddha's teaching itself?' Now the question isn't really so simple. The position isn't really so straight forward as all that.

As I'm sure you've all gathered by this time, we're concerned with Buddhism, especially here in this Vihara, we're concerned with Buddhism, not just theoretically, not just as a subject of study, but practically; not just as a matter of intellectual research and investigation, but as a matter above all else of the actual spiritual life; Now we know, if we've, tried, that it's very very difficult indeed to lead a spiritual life, whether as a Buddhist, or as a Christian or a Muslim or as a Hindu, or as a follower of any other faith, in complete isolation from other people who are following that same path. Last week I think it was, we referred to the case of those people, quite a number of them, perhaps even quite a few hundred of them, scattered up and down this country, who though Buddhists, have no contact with any other Buddhists; who are quite isolated, quite cut off. And it does seem, from what we've heard of them, from what they've told us, that they do have a quite difficult time. And that's why most of them do look forward so very much to occasional trips to London, where they can meet other Buddhists or else visits to Bidulph (?) for meditation, or else, once a year perhaps, a sojourn at the Buddhist Society Summer School. And they look forward to it so much because to struggle, to strive to lead a spiritual life by oneself, just with the help of books, with no-one to talk to, no-one whose advice one can ask, no-one on whom one can rely and depend, no-one to whom one can turn in difficulties, or at least for a little encouragement, a little inspiration, if not a little guidance, it's very very difficult indeed.

Aristotle says somewhere that if a man can endure to live alone, well, he's either a beast or a

God! So most people as he himself goes on to say, are neither beasts nor Gods, but somewhere in-between. So they can't stay alone. They need society, they need company, they need companions, they need friends, and in the spiritual life, even more so perhaps, than in the secular ordinary social life. So for most people we do find that the spiritual life is best, certainly most easily lead, as a member of a spiritual group. One may not even be in contact with anyone highly advanced spiritually, but at least if one is in contact with a group, that is with other people following the same spiritual path that oneself is following, then at least there is mutual encouragement and mutual stimulation. I remember in this connection, it just comes to me, as I happen to be speaking about this, that when I took up myself, the monastic life, I found it very very helpful indeed in as much as there were two of us together. I was ordained as a (?) as a novice, at the same time as my friend, who is now in charge of an important Vihara in (?) that is Bhikkhu (2) We both became together at Kusinagara, at the hands of a well-known Burmese Maha-Thera. After that, we set out on our travels together, stayed together in various Ashrams, various hermitages, sometimes in mountain caves.. So it was very encouraging sometime that if one flagged a little, then the other was there to stimulate. If one say wanted to get up late, well the other was there to say well no we must get up early this morning and meditate, and so On Or if one was studying and didn't quite understand what he was reading, well there was the other one to ask, to discuss With, to consult, so one does find this sort of thing very very useful, ver very helpful indeed, not only in the monastic life, but even in the case of our spiritual life as lay Buddhists. We get a great deal of encouragement, or we can get, should get a great deal of encouragement and stimulation from our fellow Buddhists, those who are following the s:ame path, those who are aspiring to the realization of the same spiritual ideals. We find as Buddhists that our spiritual lives are not lived in isolation. As Dunne says,'No man is an island entire unto himself.' We're all linked, as it were, underground or under sea as it were, to the continent, to the larger life the life of the group. So our spiritual lives as Buddhists are part of the larger spiritual life of the group to which we may belong.

Now this particular group in our cases will either be this Vihara, the Hampstead Buddhist Vihara, it may be the Buddhist Society, or it may be some little provincial group in Birmingham, or at Oxford or in some other part of the country. Ultimately of course, it is what we call the whole Buddhist, or the whole English Buddhist movement in this country. This ultimately is the larger spiritual group to which we all belong. So we can't really separate ourselves from it. If we want to lead a spiritual life as Buddhists in the fullest possible sense that we can. And the majority of English Buddhists of course in any case don't want to separate themselves from that larger spiritual life of the group to which they belong, because they find it so very helpful.

At the same time there should be a word of warning, or at least of caution here; that is to say, we shouldn't use the Buddhist group as what we may call a 'symbiotic community substitute'. Now what do we mean by that? Suppose someone's rather lonely; they just live round the corner somewhere all on their own; don't go to church of course; don't belong to a club - perhaps it's too expensive; don't like sports or games; don't even like chess; but they come to learn that there's a nice little organization near at hand, nice people meet there every Sunday afternoon sometimes during the week. It's quite pleasant to go along and have a little company, a little chat, and if you have to listen to the lecture also, well that's perhaps a little price which no-one minds paying for the sake of the social amenities. So in this way, the Buddhist group comes to be used it may so happen as a sort of community substitute. One doesn't belong to a real community, either because one lives in some little flat miles away from one's place of business, one has no relations, no friends, no sort of social group to belong to, so one starts using the Buddhist group in this way. So up to a point of course this is in a sense legitimate, but to use it altogether as a sort of substitute in this way, isn't quite what one has in mind. We'll come back to this topic perhaps a little later on.

If the Buddhist group is properly used of course, it provides us with what we may describe as the immediate context of our spiritual life. Now as already has been made clear I hope in this series, there's no spiritual life without self-awareness. You can have of course some sort of

conventional religious life, without self-awareness, but you can't have any really meaningful progressing, constantly progressing spiritual life without self-awareness.

In a sense one might even say the whole spiritual life is simply a process of progressive intensification of one's self-awareness. So that out of the very intensity of one's self-awareness, as we saw a little while ago, I think it was last week, we reach the state of awareness as it were of non-self, or non-self awareness. However we're not concerned with that this afternoon.

Now I've said that our spiritual life is bound up with that of the spiritual group or spiritual community to which we belong. Or putting it in Buddhist terminology, which may be more comprehensible to some of you, Going for Refuge as we call it, *sarana* is an essential and intrinsic part of being a Buddhist itself. You can't be a Buddhist and go for Refuge to the Buddha, go for Refuge to the Dharma, and not go for Refuge to the Sangha. Going for Refuge to the Sangha therefore is an intrinsic part, part of the very definition as it were, of one's being a Buddhist.

Now spiritual self-awareness should include therefore awareness of ourselves as members of the group to which we belong. If we're not aware of ourselves as members of the spiritual group to which we belong, then we're not really fully aware of ourselves. Because the fact of our membership of the group is part of the very definition of ourselves. So in this case it means the whole Buddhist movement in England. In other words, we can't be really and truly spiritually self-aware of ourselves, unless we're at the same time, aware of the movement to which we belong, of which we're members, and of which in fact we are a part.

Now if we understand this, if we understand this movement, this Buddhist movement in England, understand something of its history, its significance its possible or probable destination, then we shall understand all the better what we as individual Buddhists are, what we're trying to do, what we're trying to accomplish. So that's why we find it necessary to include in this particular series of talks *Introducing Buddhism*, one on Buddhism in England.

Now historically speaking we may say, Buddhism in England falls into three phases: there's obviously the past, then there's the present now, and then of course there's the future. Let's consider each of these in turn. First of all the past. Many people don't know it, but Buddhism has been known in this country for well over a hundred years now, well over a century.

Before that of course there was complete, one might even say, fantastic ignorance of Buddhism in this country, as in all the other Western countries. I remember according to one early writer whom I read, I think it was at the beginning of the last century, I mean he write at the beginning of the last century, not that I read him at the beginning of the last century! According to that writer, the Buddha was non other than the Egyptian God Apis(?) which of course is the Egyptian Bull God, the white sacred bull. So the Buddha was identified by one early orientalist with Apis. During the second half of the 19th Century however, we may say, this dense ignorance began to be dispelled. During that time there were in this country a number of very distinguished oriental scholars, whom we usually call orientalists. The first of them, the earliest of them was Spence Hardy, who made a special study of monastic life in Ceylon. This study was published more than a hundred years ago. Then there *was* Childers, who was for several years, Governor-General of Ceylon, who learned Pali, who translated Buddhist scriptures from Pali into English, and also compiled the first Pali-English dictionary. And then of course there was Rhys Davids, the great Rhys Davids, who inaugurated the systematic translation as well as publication of all the Pali Theravada texts, and who also launched the even greater dictionary the Pali Text's Society's Pali-English dictionary, besides founding the Pali Text Society itself.

So these three great scholars, these three orientalists, Spence Hardy, Childers and Rhys Davids, these of course were all workers in the field specifically of Pali Buddhist studies. At

the same time we had in the field of Sanskrit Buddhist studies, Max Muller. His life work of course was rather of the study the edition and translation of the Rig Veda and various other Hindu works, but he also devoted a considerable amount of time and attention to Buddhist Sanskrit Texts - the Mahayana Sutras and so forth, and translated a number of them himself. Then for. Chinese Buddhist studies, there is the well-known figure of Beale, who published his C?) of Buddhist Scriptures nearly a hundred years ago, including material which is still very valuable indeed. These are just a few, some of the greatest names in these fields.

There are also translations of works on Buddhism by various continental scholars, made into English. A number of Buddhist texts and scriptures were also translated into English about this period by various scholars working in or from different languages. One might just mention in passing Bishop Bigandey an Anglican Bishop in Burma who compiled an enormous work from Burmese and Pali sources, on the life and teachings of the Buddha. It's a little out of date now as you can imagine, but it still is quite a valuable work and a very worthy effort for its time and period.

So in this way, a great deal of the Pali Canon came to be translated into English, and a large number, well at least some Mahayana Sutras. And knowledge about Buddhism, knowledge of Buddhism, began to be introduced in this country. On the whole we can say that there were very serious, very considerable limitations.

This knowledge, knowledge derived from the books and translations, was on the whole confined to scholarly circles. Either the circles of the professional orientalist, people who were working in the East, or living in the East, and had an administrative interest in the religions of the people over whom they were ruling; or else, students, professional students of comparative religion in this country; or students of ancient thought and so on. So even though a certain amount of knowledge was disseminated during the latter half of the last century, it was mainly limited to these more scholarly circles. An important part was however played by. the Theosophical Society. The Theosophical Society as many of you know, was founded in the United States in 1873 by Madame Lavatsky and Colonel Alcott. And it very quickly spread to this, country. The Theosophical Society had, still has three main objects: . fixat, the formation of a nucleus of Universal brotherhood; secondly the comparative study of religions ;and thirdly, investigation of the occult powers of wan.

So with these aims and objects, with this very broad platform, the Theosophical Society did help to spread in this country, as elsewhere in. the West also, quite a number of Buddhistic ideas. Sometimes in a slightly garbled form, but that was perhaps inevitable at that particular time. One great merit of the Theosophical Society's work at least was that it familiarized people with the idea of Buddhism as a living religion. The orientalists, the oriental scholars, tended. to present Buddhism as something dead; that's the impression one often gets from reading their works. But the Theosophical Society did make it quite plain, make it. quite clear, that Buddhism was a living religion, and that quite intelligent people could follow it. It wasn't just an oriental exotic curiosity.

About the same time, Edwin Arnold's very famous poem on the life of the Buddha, that is to say *The Light of Asia* published in the 70's of the last century did a very great. deal of good work in spreading some knowledge about the Buddha and his teaching. This work, this poem is still a bestseller - I believe it has run into, so far as the original publishers alone are concerned practically a hundred editions, which isn't bad!. So so much for the latter half of the last century with the work of the oriental scholars and the Theosophical Society, followed by Edwin Arnold.

With the beginning of the 20th Century, the present century, we may say that a new phase begins. This is the phase, this is the period within which English people, that is to say, People born and educated in this country begin adopting and following Buddhism as their own personal religion, their own way. of life. So Buddhism is no longer in this phase, in this period, just an object of academic study, intellectual interest, but it becomes a really living

religion, followed, Practised, studied by people in this country. Now the first Buddhist organization was started quite a long time ago - exactly sixty years ago in 1906, and it was started by two stalwarts, one of whom is still alive in fact - R.J. Jackson and by J.R. Payne; so they started this first Buddhist organization in this country.

In 1908, there returned to this country, after spending 6 years in the East, as a monk, Ananda-Maitreya, born as Alan Bennett, of Scottish origin, who went out to the East to Burma especially in 1902, especially with the object of learning Buddhism there, of studying it more thoroughly, so as to be able to return and preach it in this country. Now after his return, after he started his work here in 1908, the first Buddhist magazine or periodical called *The Buddhist Review* was started. So these three, the organization, a monk, and the magazine, they carried on for sixteen years till 1923, when Ananda-Maitreya died. Now it's rather remarkable that we can say, or we can even claim, that the English as it were, converted themselves to Buddhism. Here's something practically unique, or perhaps even unique, in the history of Buddhism. When one studies the history of Buddhism, what one usually finds is that some monk missionary, goes from say India to China, or from India to Tibet, or from China to

Korea, or Korea to Japan, and introduces, the religion, the teaching of the Buddha to the indigenous inhabitants. But this isn't what happened in this particular case. In this particular case it was English people themselves who took interest in Buddhism, studied it and decided to go to the East, in the case of Ananda Maitreya, gain a further a deeper knowledge, and then return to this country and disseminate it. So this is quite an important fact, apart from its historical uniqueness so far as I know, or practical' historical uniqueness, it's important in as much as we may say it's characteristic of the whole course of development of English Buddhism. It has always been very independent relying on its own effort, its own study, and its own thought.

This isn't perhaps surprising that it should be so, because as I mentioned last week, over the last few hundred years in the East Buddhism has not been in a very active, condition. It's as though the most creative phases were a thing of the past, very little life, very little energy, at least organizationally, were left in Buddhism there in the East. So after Ananda-Maitreya's death in 1923, the gap was filled by a series, a very important series of 36 lectures by a disciple of R J Jackson called Francis Payne. So his lectures kept the movement going, during that sort of interregnum. And then in 1924, Mr. Christmas Humphreys founded the Buddhist branch of the Theosophical Society, which in the next year, 1925, became the Buddhist Society as an independent organization. So the Buddhist Society's still the oldest living Buddhist organization not only in this country, but even in the whole of the West.

So during this same period, very important additions were made to the literature about Buddhism, available in English. It's at this time that Dr. D.T. Suzuki started writing in English and publishing his writings and articles in book form, about Zen, which as you know has assumed a tremendous importance in the development of Buddhism, not only in this country, but in America, in the United States also. At the same time, Dr. Evans-Wentz who had studied in Sikkim, launched the Oxford Tibetan series, with translations of very important Tibetan texts, Life of Milarepa, Tibetan Book of the Dead, Tibetan Yoga and Secret Doctrines, and so on. So these contributions of Dr Suzuki and of Evans-Wentz have very enormously enriched our knowledge of Buddhism, which hitherto had been confined mainly to the Theravada Pali Canon, and to certain selected Mahayana Sutras. Dr Suzuki's writing in particular, we may say, marked a turning point, because they succeeded in penetrating into circles where Buddhism had been hitherto unknown. Philosophers, psychologists, students of comparative religion, many of them, some even famous like Jung, and Fromm, devoted themselves to Dr Suzuki's writing, and apparently were very deeply influenced, or at least impressed by him.

During the war of course, there was a sort of lull in Buddhist activities in this country, but immediately after the war there was a very considerable expansion. The Buddhist Society itself became much better known, and scores of new books on Buddhism were published, by various publishing houses. In particular, one can refer to Mr Christmas Humphrey's Pelican

Buddhism, 300,000 copies of which have so far been sold. If one reflects upon it, that is quite an achievement if one reflects that there are at least in this country 300,000 people who've read a book, at least one book on Buddhism, and if one assumes that it is quite reasonable that say two or three people have read many of these copies, well it comes very near the half million mark. Buddhism is beginning to make some little impression it seems.

On a much profounder level, there are Dr Conze's translations from The Perfection of Wisdom Sutras, which belong, at least so far as publication is concerned, to the same period. *The Perfection of Wisdom* Sutras are perhaps the most important single group of Sutras in the whole of Mahayana Buddhist Canonical literature. There are about 36 of these Sutras, some of them several volumes long, some just a page in length.

So Dr Conze has completed the enormous task of single-handedly translating the whole of them; many have been published, others are available in typescript. In my opinion this is one of the great translation pioneering work of Buddhist history, ranking with the work of (?) and (?) Very remarkable that one man should have been able to achieve so much despite even one might say, very little encouragement. By 1955, that's just 10 years ago, there was founded the English Sangha Trust, and the English Sangha Association.

And the idea behind these two bodies was mainly to send trainees to the East, for ordination as monks, and for study, and also to arrange for their support, and to Provide them with facilities for teaching after they returned to this country. And with this of course, we come down to the present day. So much for the past.

So where does the Buddhist movement stand now? By now, in this context, one means, say for the sake of speaking, last year and this year: 1965 and 1966. Where does it stand now? Well we can say to begin with that at least the name of Buddhism is quite widely known. When I left these shores 21 years ago, I can say that hardly anybody in this country had even heard the name of Buddhism - very very few indeed. Much much less than. But now, quite a large number of people, many thousands, if not millions of people, have at least heard the word Buddhism. At least they've heard it. That's a little thing but at least it's a beginning. We can't say honestly that there's very much general understanding of Buddhism. Though many people have just heard the name of Buddhism, the vast majority of them haven't really heard much more than that. Those who really know a little about Buddhism are perhaps to be numbered only in thousands, perhaps not even that.

But at the same time we do find that lots of people, especially younger people, are very eager to learn something about Buddhism. Here at the Vihara, we get lots of invitations from schools, especially from 6th Form Societies, and classes for comparative religion, even divinity classes, religious knowledge classes, have talks on Buddhism. There's a constant stream as one might say of such invitations. And this is a very encouraging sign for the future. We haven't got enough speakers, haven't got enough lecturers to be able to get round to all these groups, all these schools, all these classes that want lectures On Buddhism. So It's an encouraging sign that so many people are asking 'what is Buddhism?' - wanting to know something at least about it. Unfortunately, it doesn't appear that so far, Buddhism has really touched or really penetrated the religious and intellectual life of this country. I mentioned Suzuki but he's an exception. Apart from Suzuki probably no-one has really succeeded in penetrating or even touching the religious and intellectual life of this country so far as Buddhism is concerned. I'll return to this perhaps in a few minutes. Now at present we may say, organizationally speaking, the Buddhist movement in this country comprises in the first place, The Buddhist Society, the oldest and largest Buddhist organization in the West, and ourselves, that is to say, the English Sangha Trust, and Sangha Association which run this Hampstead Buddhist Vihara. So these two we may say, between them are the two poles supporting the axis upon which the whole English Buddhist movement revolves. There are also Viharas at Chiswick and at Richmond. The Chiswick Vihara as you probably know, is run by the Mahabodhi Society of Ceylon; the Richmond Vihara is run by the Thai government, which has the advantage of very vast resources upon which to draw.

At the same time there are of course about a score I would say, of provincial groups, scattered up and down the country, from we may say Brighton in the south, right up to Newcastle in the north. Some of these have got only a dozen or so members, some have got 20 or thirty, I don't think any have got more than about 32 or 33. All very small groups indeed.]~ think by this time, I've visited practically all of them. Now Buddhists in London and Buddhists in these little provincial groups are linked up by two magazines, one being of course *The Middle Way*, published by the Buddhist Society, and the other being *The Buddhist* published by ourselves. There's also, as a very great medium for linking up one with another, the Buddhist Society's Annual Summer School, to which people come not only from all over England, but even from different parts of the continent. Last year we had people from Switzerland and from Germany, and from Sweden and from Holland, as well as from all over this country. Now one has already gathered no doubt, that the English Buddhist movement, or the Buddhist movement in England is still very very small indeed. I'm often asked by different people, especially by journalists, how many Buddhists there are in this country. They seem to attach very great importance to this, getting an actual number, a figure, the baptized or the converted, or the initiated. Now my own estimate is that there aren't more than 3,000. The other day I heard a figure which seems to me quite fantastic of 30,000. But my own personal estimate is about 3,000. That is being a bit generous, not insisting that everyone of the 3,000 has sort of fully taken the Refuge, Or strictly observes the 5 Precepts, but being a bit generous, and including those who are pretty well interested and fairly committed, and who pay their subscriptions say to the Association after only one or two reminders, one can say, well about altogether 3000 Buddhists in this country. Out of those 3,000 I would say, and here of course I speak from direct personal observation and experience, I would say about 100 are really involved in the Buddhist movement - 100 - not more than that; maybe about half of them come here, and about half of them go elsewhere, or if they're in a little provincial group, they just remain where they are. Not more- altogether than 100. The rest, that is the other 2,900 or whatever it is, apparently just read about Buddhism, or subscribe to Buddhist magazines, and of course -if they're in London attend -also at least from time to time, a few lectures. So this is our movement in terms of organizations and numbers so far. Quite a small movement, one of the very smallest religious movements in this country, if not in fact the smallest. However, we're by no means devoid of hope, because it's quite clear that we are expanding. Even though it's very very slowly. And another very encouraging fact is that our average age is steadily going down. In some of the provincial groups one doesn't see this yet. In one or two of them the average age I think at a rough guess is 74 something like that! But I've noticed, at least since my arrival nearly a year and a half ago, that from about 55, it crept down- to about 53, 50, and even now, it's about, well it's not more than about 40 perhaps now, which is pretty good. Now this mention' of age and youth brings us to the future of Buddhism in this country.

Now the future obviously will grow out of the present, just as the present has grown out of the past. Let's begin our little excursion into the future by taking a broader and perhaps a deeper view of the present. Now I've observed already that Buddhism is very much a minority religion, but it hasn't as yet made any real impact on the life and thought of this country. Life and thought in this country go on', just as though such a thing as Buddhism had never existed', and had never been introduced into this country. So' far as the national life as a whole is concerned, we'll, there might just as we'll be no such thing as Buddhism here at all. There's no impact so far. Now whether in the future Buddhism will ever be able to make' a serious, a real impact on the life and thought of this country, depends I feel upon whether there is indeed anything which is consonant in some way or other, with the character and culture of the English people. Now here one must pause of course and take a look at the nature of the English character and culture.

One can of course generalize in so many different ways. I think I have perhaps a better or a greater right to generalize about the English character because I've been out of this country for 20 years, so I've seen it as it were from' afar off, from a distance, and perhaps therefore more objectively. I've also had an opportunity of hearing what Indians have to say about the English, what the Burmese have to say about them, the Chinese have to say about them, the Tibetans, and various other nationalities. It's sometimes quite revealing. So I think I have the

material with which to arrive at least at some sort of conclusion about our national character. I would say that the distinctive, the most distinctive trait of the English character, taking it by and large is that it's empirical. Empiricism. That is the English mind, at it's most representative, proceeds from facts to theories, rather than from theories to facts. And sometimes of course, it doesn't bother about the theories at all. If something works well enough in any aspect of life, it doesn't particularly bother why it works, or what would happen if they did it in some other way. So this sort of empiricism, this sort of pragmatism almost, is especially observable of course in the political life of this country. We haven't produced any great political philosophies, at least not any which have been really operative in daily life but we have had at the same time nevertheless, a very active political life, and a very great history of constitutional development. Now Buddhism we may say is a sort of spiritual empiricism. It asks us to take nothing on trust. It asks us - the Buddha himself in fact asks us - not to believe something simply because he says it. We are to test it, to verify it, to experience it even, ourselves. So the Zen form of Buddhism is perhaps particularly attractive from this point of view - it stresses something which is immediate and direct, to be experienced by ourselves here and now, just in the same way that we experience the coldness of water when we drink it, not taking it on trust, but just believing it. So there's empiricism in common.

Then again, we may say the English character is very tolerant. In England there's a very long tradition of freedom of thought, and belief, and religious practise, coming down even we might say, even from Anglo-Saxon days, certainly from the days of Wycliffe, whom as you know, was sometimes referred to as the morning star of reformation. Even during the Middle Ages, when many and very bloody persecutions took place in many different European countries, religious persecution - in England at least was much rarer than anywhere else in Europe. So Buddhism as we know, is probably - the most tolerant of all religions. It's never persecuted. - It's never launched a religious war. So definitely we may say, there are certain points of affinity between the English character with its empiricism and tolerance on the one hand, and between Buddhism on the other, even though of course - in the case of Buddhism, the basis is transcendental ultimately, rather than of course secular.

Now England, as you know, has been a Christian nation for many centuries, ever since St. Augustine of Canterbury came here and converted us all from paganism. But my personal feeling is that Christianity, and here I'm born out by at least some other Buddhists has never really suited the English at all; never really fitted them never really seemed to belong, like a suit which was made for somebody else and which they sort of inherited, but which hangs a bit loose here and there. So it seems as though, if we study the history of England, the greatest achievements of the English have hardly any connection with Christianity at all. For instance you take the whole field of law, whether it's the Common Law of England or any other form of law; whether you take administration, whether you take politics - no direct connection with Christianity at all. But this is the field in which some of the greatest achievements of the English have taken place. Often in fact we find that reform, political reform, legal reform, penal reform, have been made in the teeth of Church opposition. I gave an example of this some weeks ago somewhere. I hope it wasn't here because I'm going to give it again.

In 1808 a Bill was introduced to the house of Lords. It had already passed the Commons, so it was introduced into the House of Lords for the assent of the Peers, temporal and spiritual. The Bill related to capital punishment, and one of its provisions was that the penalty of death for stealing something worth 5 shillings should be abolished. Of course it was voted out - didn't stand a chance. But it's very interesting to see the voting list: at the head of the list of those voting against the Bill, who didn't want that the law whereby you could be sentenced to death for stealing something worth 5 shillings should be repealed were the two Archbishops and six bishops who happened to be in the House of Lords at that time they opposed it. So this is what we often find in the history of England, in the history of other Christian countries too, there are many similar examples.

Now suppose we take a look at the arts say literature, poetry, drama. Suppose we take say,

the example of Shakespeare. If there's anything or anyone in English literature that the English can be proud of, of course it's Shakespeare. So let's examine him, look at his tragedies, look at his histories, look at his comedies. How much is there of Christianity there? If anyone's a student of literature, well let them just say how much of Christianity? You can go through Shakespeare with a tooth comb, and you can cut out every line where Christianity is mentioned, or even God is mentioned of course if you like, except of course so far as swearing is concerned, and it will make hardly any difference - Shakespeare will still be Shakespeare. It will hardly be touched if you excised that Christian content. Of course, some scholars like Chillyard(?) they tell us now that Shakespeare's world picture was derived from medieval thought - the three storey universe and the idea of degree and so on and so forth. That's true in a sense. But the specifically Christian content and feeling are not there in Shakespeare at all.

Now suppose we compare Shakespeare with another very great European poet say Dante the great Italian poet. If we say compare Shakespeare's plays with say Dante's Divine Comedy; In fact if you take away the Christianity, if you take away the Catholicism from Dante, well there's nothing left: almost every line is permeated with it. So there is a very significant contrast here - the Italian poet, the greatest of the Italian poets, is Christian through and through, but the greatest of the English poets well as we say, couldn't care less apparently. Some people even say that Shakespeare wasn't a Christian, was a sort of initiate who knew things that Christians of his day didn't and deliberately disseminated them through his play. And if one goes through the plays carefully, sometimes the thoughts without being in the least bit Christian that one wonders whether it might not be true.

Now some people of course might raise an objection and say, well Dante is medieval, whereas Shakespeare is post-Renaissance, so you can't really compare the two in this respect. All right, if you want a medieval English poet to compare with Dante, take Chaucer - you're no better off there: a thoroughly secular poet. You can find bits of Christianity here and there in his Canterbury Tales: for instance he describes the monk (and not very flatteringly), he describes the Friar too, he describes the Priest, he describes the Canon - none of them very flatteringly. He doesn't seem to have much sympathy with the Church at all.

We find that these great poets, whether Shakespeare, Chaucer and so on, are thoroughly, almost completely secular. They don't seem to have, derived any of their inspiration from Christianity at all. Their connection with it is very loose - they sit loose to it as it were. But suppose we turn to the visual arts - suppose we turn to painting. Well who are the three greatest names in English painting? Well there's Hogarth, there's Gainsborough, and there's Turner - these three. But if we go through them, if we examine their paintings we find they're all thoroughly secular: Hogarth painting street scenes and people getting drunk and Gin Lane and various stages of debauchery and so on. Gainsborough of course, elegant portraits of the aristocracy, and Turner, sunrises and sunsets, and trains rushing through the mist and all that sort of thing; all thoroughly secular. If you put all their paintings together, you'd find there's hardly a Holy Family between them! Whereas if you turn to Italian painting or Spanish painting, or even German painting or even French painting in its early stages, it teems with religious subjects - Holy Families, and Madonnas, and Crucifixes. So where in English art will you find all this? You have to go right back to the early Medieval period to find a few wooden painted panels - that's all.

So it's just the same with English or I should say perhaps, British philosophy or philosophical tradition. There's virtually no connection with Christianity at all. Take Bacon, Sir Francis Bacon. Lip service to Christianity, but busy laying the foundations of induction and the scientific method; on the other hand, take Locke, take Berkeley, take Hume - of course in Berkeley's case a nominal connection with the Church: after all he was a bishop - well so is the bishop of Woolwich! But you can detect the Christianity. And what about Theology. Well the British or the English have never shone in the field of Theology at all. I don't know whether anyone can think of a single British Theologian. There's Bishop Butler, but no-one

reads him nowadays, or very few people read him, and perhaps he isn't worth mentioning very much. It is significant though that if we go through English literature, we find that there are a number of important moralists - especially in the 17th and 18th centuries. And sometimes the psychological analysis of these moralists - for instance Samuel Johnson, is very very acute indeed. Very sharp, very perceptive.

Now what about Saints - Christian Saints? How many saints has this country produced? They're sort of experts in Christianity, sort of technicians in Christianity. How many Christian Saints has this country produced? You have to go very far back in history - you have to go back for example to St. Edward the Confessor and Martyr - I think it was the 7th Century or something like that. Or you have to go back to very recently canonized figures like St. Thomas More, canonized in this century by the Roman Catholic Church, apparently to annoy the English Protestants. Now in this country, we haven't produced anybody, any saint, to compare say with St. Francis, or any of the other of the great founders of Orders on the continent, like St. Bernard, or St. Benedict - anyone of that sort - St. Dominic - we just haven't produced them. We've produced very very few mystics, very few indeed; just a little cluster of anonymous mystics somewhere, deep in the Middle Ages and that's all. And hardly any religious thinkers. There are the Cambridge Platonists of the 17th Century, and early 18th Century, but they were really only half Christian, as their name suggests. Their main inspiration comes from Plato and (?)

So when we consider the matter seriously, -when we go through systematically, it seems that Christianity in this country has had a certain social and political importance, but that the spiritual and cultural life of the country has really proceeded quite independently of Christianity, especially since the Reformation and the spoliation of the monasteries, which were at a pretty low ebb at that time. It's almost as though the English couldn't really thrive, couldn't really do their best on Christianity.

Now my own personal conviction is that we shall do very much better with Buddhism. But for this to be possible in the future, two things at least are necessary: first of all, there's what we call the image. Nowadays, People are very concerned with their image - the image of this and the image of that. When I first came back to this country, and hear all this talk about image, I thought people we're talking about idol worship - well yes it is, one might say it is idol worship but in a rather different sense. Now the image to Buddhism, to use this current idiom, the image of Buddhism as something oriental, something mysterious, something exotic, something *Lobsang Rampa-ish*, that we may say, must go. Otherwise, very little chance for Buddhism in this country. We know of course, that historically speaking, Buddhism originated in the East as Christianity also did in the Middle East. But in its essence, intrinsically, substantially, Buddhism is really no more Eastern than Western, any more than Christianity is.

So English Buddhism, if it is to spread, if it is to have a real influence, must gradually shed its oriental trappings. There aren't of course many of them. English Buddhism has done this to some extent already. But it will mean in practice, that it will have to be able to get along, at least so far as the average English Buddhist is concerned, without either Pali or Sanskrit, or Chinese or Tibetan; without of course Eastern-style rituals, though we may devise some of our own. And without Eastern dress, one might say, even for the monks. Otherwise we shall find that our appeal will be very strictly limited indeed. Now this will be a sort of test for English Buddhists - whether they're capable of extracting the essence of Buddhism, the non-geographical non-cultural supra-cultural essence of Buddhism, and distilling it as it were, and keeping to just that, and creating out of it their own cultural form. It'll be a test therefore, whether they can distinguish the essential in Buddhism, from the nonessential, the kernel from the husk. The husk is historically important, but if we want to eat the kernel, we mustn't hesitate to discard the husk.

Now secondly, it's very important, it's imperative that English Buddhism should link up with those elements in English life, English thought, English culture, which are Buddhistic - not Buddhism, but Buddhistic. There's a very important book by Blythe, called *Zen in Oriental*

Classics and English Literature, and this is an excellent example of how this sort of linking up should be done. Blythe's got a number of chapters - things like purity, innocence, truth and so on, and under these chapters, under these headings, he discusses important Zen concepts, - quotes from the Zen Masters of Ch'an Masters- regarding them, and shows also by quoting extensively from English poetry, that the same sort of ideas, or the same order of experience are adumbrated; in English poets like Wordsworth, Keats, Shelley, Shakespeare - he's a very very well-versed person indeed in English literature, having been a professor of it in a Japanese University for very many years.

So this is the sort of thing that needs to be done - this sort of linking up. So in the same way one needs research, not only into English literature, but into English philosophy, mysticism, ethical thought and so on. For instance, in Buddhism there's a very important Yogachara philosophy of Yogacharin or Vijnanavadin philosophy and one of the masters of that, one of the principle exponents of that is Vasubandhu. Now in English thought, you've got something very similar in the philosophy of Berkeley. So someone should take up this. Someone should compare Berkeley on the one hand, Vasubandhu on the other, and see what is produced, what comes of it. So in this way, there's a whole vast field of work, but unfortunately, there are no workers - very few people seem interested in pursuing things, following things in this way.

Now you've all heard, I'm sure, of the Renaissance. The Renaissance is the rebirth of European culture in the 15th to 16th centuries, due to the rediscovery of Graeco-Roman literature and art. Now Schopenhauer who was himself very much influenced by Eastern thought, both by the Upanishads and by Buddhism, Schopenhauer predicted on one occasion, in one of his writings, he said '...That the Renaissance, which shall be brought about in Europe, in the West, as a result of the discovery of Eastern thought, Eastern spirituality, Eastern religion, will surpass, will exceed in importance, the Renaissance brought about in the 15th to 16th centuries through the discovery or re-discovery of the literature of Greece and Rome.' That was Schopenhauer's prediction.

Now Buddhism we may say is the flower, the consummation of Eastern spirituality, especially in its Ch'an or Zen form. England on the other hand has a very highly developed secular culture, and that culture, it seems is now in need of a fresh inspiration, a fresh impetus. So these two come together, Buddhism as a spiritual teaching on the one hand, and English culture on the other - there is no knowing we may say, what could be produced. So the English Buddhist movement we may say, is the spearhead of all this, the spearhead of this sort of convergence between Buddhism and English secular, largely non-Christian culture. And the spearhead we may say of the English Buddhist movement, is here amongst all of us. So this should pause and make us think; we should try to realize as it were, our historic responsibility. We're all interested in Buddhism, we all have in some measure, inherited, in one way or another some measure of English culture. So in all of us, in each one of us, not only collectively, but individually, these two streams, these two tendencies, these two historical traditions, spiritual and secular, Buddhist and English, are coming together. So we should all make some effort to contribute to this, to enrich this. The other day, on Friday, I attended the memorial meeting for the late-Indian Prime Minister, Mr. Shastri at the Albert Hall. As you can probably imagine, it was quite a grand occasion with many important people present. Among the speakers there were the Prime Minister, and Lord Mountbatten. So both of them, and all the other speakers made a number of references to Indo-British friendship: the Indian people and the British people must work together, all that sort of thing which is usually said on such occasions. But it would seem that the most significant exchanges, the most significant contact cannot really be made on the political level or the purely political level at all. This is comparatively superficial, doesn't go far enough, doesn't go deep enough. It's on the spiritual plane, the spiritual level, that the contacts have to be made, and the exchanges have to take place. So perhaps what is happening here is even more important than what happened the other evening in the Albert Hall. Here, though the numbers involved are fewer, though the people involved, are less, much less prominent, but the level on which the contact and exchange are taking place, is immeasurably higher, and therefore of immeasurably greater significance.

Now just a few more general observations on Buddhism in England, and then we shall close. First of all, a few remarks on the Sangha and the laity. At present, we have in this country, only two English Buddhist monks' - one is Bhikkhu - (*unclear*) who is at Bidulph, and the other is myself. Now the number of English Buddhist monks in this country isn't very likely to increase, at least not very much in the near future. Perhaps very shortly we shall be losing one monk, that is we shall be losing Bhikkhu M who will be going into retreat and retirement for an indefinite period. It must be admitted that the life of the Buddhist monk in the West is not very easy. Even after spending a number of years in the East, one does find that the pressures and claims as it were of life in the West are all pulling in a quite different direction from Buddhism itself. So one has to stand very firm indeed, so as not to be carried away by all these.

So with the prospect of a very small number of monks only in this country, as even among those who are deeply interested in Buddhism, the number of those who wish to become monks is very very small, microscopic, with such a situation, the laity have to take an increasingly responsible role. This doesn't of course mean that unqualified people should start acting as though they were qualified - not that at all. But it means that the laity should make a much greater effort to qualify themselves to undertake some at least of the functions and duties and responsibilities, which traditionally in Buddhism are the prerogative of the monk. It means that they must study Buddhism harder, they must meditate harder, and give up more and more all those activities apart from those necessary just for maintaining themselves and their families, which are inconsistent with Buddhism. In the case of some, especially those who are single and without responsibility, they should try to reorganize their lives as much as possible.

If they can't become monks, then at least take a job, as I've said on one previous occasion, which doesn't demand too much of them, which just provides them with what they need to live, and devote as much as possible of their spare time to the study and practice and dissemination of Buddhism. As I've said already, as I've emphasized in fact our movement, our Buddhist movement in this country at present, is very very small indeed. At the same time we must admit it's not only small, but it isn't of a very high calibre. - Sometimes we can comfort ourselves by saying we are quantitatively not much, but at least, qualitatively we do count. But not here. We're a very small movement, and at the same time we must admit that our intellectual and cultural calibre is rather low. It is the duty incumbent upon each and every English Buddhist or person coming here, to do their utmost to improve themselves, to try to raise their intellectual standard, to raise their cultural level, to learn more and more about Buddhism, more and more about their own culture also, otherwise it's quite impossible for worthwhile intelligent people to be attracted to the movement. Those who are more advanced in their study of Buddhism should try to specialize a little, take up particular topics for research and study, pursue them, follow them, and try to exhaust them. Someone might take up for example say, Buddhism and psychoanalysis. Another one might make a special study of Buddhist art. Another one might decide to read as much as he possibly can in English about Chinese Buddhism. In this way, each seriously interested person should try to make himself an expert at least in a small way, in some particular branch of Buddhism or Buddhist studies, or Buddhism in relation to various aspects of Western thought and life and culture. And periodically, they should either embody the result of their researches in a lecture or in an article, so that all can share the fruits of what they have discovered, what they have studied.

Now the mention of the responsibility of the laity introduces the question of the whole social side of Buddhism. I personally feel quite strongly that all Buddhists should get to know one another as well as they possibly can; especially those who are centred on a Vihara or any such similar institution. And a serious effort should be made to develop amongst themselves, or amongst ourselves, a spirit of brotherhood. The Theosophical Society which I mentioned a little earlier on, has 'the creation of a nucleus of universal brotherhood' as their first objective, and I can say from my own experience of the Theosophical Society, that they do try very sincerely and very earnestly to put that into practice. I have known Theosophical groups in Singapore, in Malaya, in India, and to a much lesser extent in this country, and one does find almost always, this feeling, this spirit of brotherhood amongst them. So the Buddhists also

should try to cultivate this sort of spirit, and this sort of attitude. At the same time, when they get together, it shouldn't be just a social sort of getting together. In other words, as I said a little earlier on, the Buddhist community, the spiritual community, shouldn't be just a symbiotic community substitute, it should have a spiritual meaning, a spiritual purpose. When one gets together with other Buddhists, well discuss Buddhism, discuss the Buddhist movement, discuss what can be done to improve it, to make it progress, to help it, to make it more active more alive. And leave aside purely personal things or questions of politics, or what you read in the newspaper and so on and so forth.

However, we've already gone a little over time I believe, as I can understand from Mr. (?)'s rather reproachful glancing, and no doubt I've already said more than enough. But I do feel that if in the present English Buddhism, which of course means all of us, can do, as I have suggested in the course of this talk, then its future will be definitely assured.