Aspects of Buddhist Psychology

Tape 41: The Psychology of Spiritual Development

Mr Chairman, Reverend Sir and Friends:

I suppose all of us were young once - in some cases rather a large number of years ago - and I'm sure that when we were young, most of us heard from time to time, perhaps from the lips of our parents or other elders - fairy tales. And some of you may remember from that far distant period hearing the fairy tale of the Sleeping Beauty. And you may remember how in this fairy tale, the Sleeping Beauty was asleep for a hundred years in the midst of a beautiful palace, in the midst of beautiful gardens, and that the gardens were surrounded by an enormous hedge of thick, prickly bushes absolutely bristling with thorns, and the prince who was to awake her with the proverbial kiss had to struggle through this thick thorn hedge to get at this princess.

Now you may have been thinking recently that we are in a similar sort of predicament - because we are trying to approach this subject - the sleeping princess as it were - of Buddhist psychology. And last week, as those of you who were present will remember, we had to struggle through the thick thorn hedge of what we call in Buddhism the Abhidharma. And I understand, from what I heard, and overheard, that some of us were a little scratched on that occasion! Now I'm happy to inform you that this week, we are on rather easier, more negotiable, ground. And we shall emerge, I hope, this evening, comparatively unscathed. Not only that, I hope that even though we are unable actually to penetrate through to the princess, we may be able to pluck here and there, perhaps, a few flowers.

Now we come this evening to an aspect of Buddhist psychology - and we are concerned in this course with the aspects of Buddhist psychology - we come to an aspect which is difficult to apply and difficult to practise, admittedly, but perhaps not so very difficult to understand, at least theoretically. This evening we come to the subject of the psychology of spiritual development, according, of course to the Buddhist tradition.

Now before we start on the subject proper, let me make just one or two preliminary observations.

I must admit to begin with that I don't like very much this word 'spiritual'. We're talking about the psychology of spiritual progress, but if I had been able to do so, I would have selected, would have discovered, a better word. But ransack the dictionary as I might, I'm afraid I could not find a better or more suitable word than this word 'spiritual'. I do remember that many years ago, when I was in India and writing books and articles on Buddhism, I did coin a word which I hoped might gain currency as a substitute for the word 'spiritual' and that was 'normative': but no-one liked it, it never caught on and I'm afraid eventually I had to drop it. So therefore we carry on with this word spiritual, than which apparently, we don't have a better word. But when it occurs in the present context, in the context of this lecture and the whole course of lectures, it is to be understood as covering, as connoting whatever conduces either directly or remotely to the attainment of what Buddhists call Enlightenment. It is in that sense that we shall be using the term this evening and on subsequent occasions.

Now we are speaking on, we're trying to understand, the psychology of spiritual development. But I think it's obvious straight away that we are using the word psychology in a wider sense than is usual, at least in some circles. Last week you may remember, those of you who were present, that we studied the Abhidharma's analysis, among other things, of mind. And we saw that the Abhidharma classified mental states - what are called *cittas* in Buddhism - mental states, according in the first place to their ethical value; whether they were skilled states dissociated from craving, anger and delusion, or unskilled states associated with craving, anger and delusion and so on, and we also saw that cittas, or mental states were classifiable according to plane. Whether they were associated with the sensuous plane, with the archetypal plane or with the higher, again to use the word, spiritual (or even noumenal) plane, or even the transcendental plane.

In this way, we saw the Abhidharma had developed a psychology not only of normal mental states - I say 'normal', of course, within inverted commas - that is to say, the states which we usually experience in our ordinary waking and dream consciousness - but the Abhidharma also developed its own psychology of what we may describe as the supernormal states - those states which transcend the ordinary waking consciousness, those which transcend the state of dream or deep sleep, those which are experienced only in comparatively lofty states of concentration and meditation. In other words the Abhidharma developed its own psychology - its own in a way quite scientific psychology - of what are loosely known as mystical states or mystical experiences. So far we got last week.

And today, this evening, we are covering to some extent much the same sort of ground. But this evening we are covering that ground in a rather different way. In fact, I may say, in a very different way indeed - much more practically, in contradistinction to the way in which we covered it last week, which was rather more theoretical.

Now let us start off with this whole idea of spiritual development. Or perhaps, to begin with, the idea of development itself in general. The dictionary defines development as "the gradual advance or growth through progressive stages". In more Buddhistic terms, we may say that development consists in the arising of a higher stage in dependence upon, conditioned by, a lower stage. In other words, to use traditional phraseology, we may say that development in Buddhism is a type of what we call dependent origination, or in other words, or rather in a single word, of conditionality.

Now once we start speaking in terms of dependent origination, in terms of conditionality, then we are carried immediately right to the very heart of Buddhist thought. So perhaps I'd better go back a little - perhaps we'd better start from the beginning. Perhaps we'd better even go back so far as the Buddha, the human historical Buddha, Gautama the Buddha, himself.

As you know or as you will remember, the Buddha gained what we call Supreme Enlightenment, *Samyak Sambodhi*, after six years of very strenuous spiritual struggle in the jungles and caves of Bihar and Upee, as we call them now. And the Supreme Enlightenment or *Samyak Sambodhi* which he gained or experienced represented what we may describe as a profound spiritual experience, an experience which was a turning point not only in his own history, his own life, but even in the life and the history of Asia, perhaps of the world itself. And we are told by the Scriptures that after experiencing Enlightenment, after winning Enlightenment, gaining Enlightenment, he remained immersed in the experience, in the bliss of Enlightenment, as the Scriptures say, for seven whole weeks.

One can just imagine, as it were, with what tremendous relief at last he plunged into that experience. Six years before, he'd left his home, left his palace, his parents, his wife, his child, and for six years he had struggled, sometimes despairing of success, sometimes wondering whether the light was ever going to dawn, but always struggling on; sometimes fasting, sometimes fainting even; sometimes with friends and followers, sometimes quite alone. But he'd always struggled on, despite everything, and at last, after six years of endeavour, he had reached the Goal. So what else in a sense, was there for him to do, but to remain there, as it were, immersed in that state, in that transcendental experience, for, according to the Scriptures, seven whole weeks, without moving, without stirring from that place.

And we are told, further, that towards the end of this period, in the fourth or fifth week, we are told, a train of thought, a train of reflection, started arising quite spontaneously in his mind. He started wondering, as it were, whether he should ever reveal to others, to other human beings, the Truth or the Reality which he had discovered; whether he should ever reveal to them the secret of his own spiritual experience. We are told that after - we can hardly say "thinking it over", at this level - but after a sort of supreme spiritual crisis, he decided, out of compassion, out of pity for the whole of humanity, to reveal what he had discovered, to make the truth known, or to preach the Dharma.

But no sooner had he made that decision, no sooner had he decided to make known the Truth that he had discovered, than a problem, a difficulty at least, arose. And this is what we know nowadays as the problem of communication: how to put across your experience, how to put across your understanding, how to put across your knowledge, to others?

And this is a problem, this problem of communication, which is faced not only by the Buddha, but by all those in the history of humanity whose insight and whose experience go beyond the average. How to put across to other people, to other human beings what one has found, or experienced or discovered? And that is why those whom we regard as exceptional people or those whom we describe as geniuses, are often, as it were, very lonely; often feel that they are, as it were, voices crying in the wilderness, because the problem of communication is so great and so intense. They have something to communicate, they have something to impart, some knowledge or some vision, but there is as it were, no-one to hear, no-one to receive, no-one to understand. And it's only, in some cases at least, centuries later that the rest of humanity, as it were, starts catching up.

And this is the problem, or something like the problem, that confronted the Buddha. He had attained or reached or experienced, the greatest of all experiences, the experience of Enlightenment. Something transcendental, something absolutely beyond the ken of the ordinary person. So how is he to communicate that? Here is a man ploughing a field, there is a man sowing, there is another man trading, another man philosophising, another man amusing himself: so how was he to communicate his experience of Enlightenment to these people? How was he to put it across? What could possibly be the medium of communication? What concept, or what formulation, could possibly bridge the gap, the tremendous gap, between the Enlightened mind and the unenlightened mind?

Now the Buddha's solution of this problem was in a way, very simple - or at least, apparently simple. And he stated his solution of this problem, he flung, as it were, this slender bridge across the gulf between the Enlightened mind and the unenlightened mind in the form of what we know in Buddhism as the law, or the principle or the Truth, of Conditionality.

This was the nexus, the link, the connection. And it is stated in the Buddhist Scriptures very briefly, very simply, perhaps we can say with deceptive brevity and deceptive simplicity - but genius very often is nothing if not simple - stated as: 'Whatever arises on any plane of existence, arises in dependence on conditions, and in the absence of those conditions, ceases.'

And according to Buddhism, according to the Buddha's teaching, this law governs the whole of the universe, on all planes whatsoever: on what we call the sensuous plane, the archetypal plane, the spiritual plane - this great law governs the whole universe. All these planes in all their aspects, not only physical, but psychological: not only psychological, but spiritual. And this principle, this statement of this Truth we may say constitutes the basis of the whole teaching of the Buddha. This law or truth or principle of universal conditionality: *Pratitya Samutpada*.

Now to us, nowadays, this sounds familiar: it has a familiar ring: it sounds almost ordinary. But in the Buddha's day, when most people believed in divine, miraculous intervention, irruptions of the supernatural into ordinary life - in the Buddha's day, this sort of idea, this sort of concept of universal conditionality, was absolutely revolutionary - it literally created a revolution in Indian thought, in Indian psychology, in Indian spiritual life.

We might even go so far as to say that a concept of this sort, of universal conditionality, of conditionality governing every level and aspect of human life, was revolutionary even in this country a hundred years ago. When Darwin, for instance, applied this idea to the question of the origin of species, when he propounded his theory of evolution, many people found it very difficult to accept: it was revolutionary in those days. It was revolutionary, we may say, in the west even sixty years ago when Freud applied this principle, or an application of it, to the workings of the subconscious mind. People used to think that things just sort of popped up into your mind - they weren't interested before that in the why and the wherefore of it, until Freud applied certain laws, or discovered or formulated certain laws and found conditionality working all the time at that level.

And we may even go so far as to say that this concept of universal conditionality is a revolutionary one even today as applied to the higher religious and spiritual life. We tend to think that on those planes things just happen by chance as it were, by a fluke: you have a sort of mystical experience and "Well, that's that." You don't know how it comes, you don't know how it goes: you have no control over it.

But Buddhism says, "No: a law is at work here, a law of conditionality. The experience arises in dependence on certain conditions. It ceases when those conditions are no longer there." So this great principle which was new, was revolutionary, even in the West until very recently, was expounded, was explained by the Buddha as the Law of Conditionality, or dependent origination, or conditioned co-production (these are alternative translations).

And he also explained, he also expounded the two forms, or two types or two trends in this great law of conditionality . And these are known as the **reactive** trend or type and the **progressive** trend or type of conditionality. We also speak in terms of the **cyclical** mode and the **spiral** mode.

Reactive, or cyclic, conditionality

Now the first type of conditionality consists, according to the Buddha's exposition, in a process of action and reaction between pairs of factors which are opposites. For instance loss and gain - you lose something; you get it back; you lose it again - there's an action and reaction between these two opposite poles of loss and gain. In the same way, pleasure and pain; you react from pleasure to pain, from pain back to pleasure; in this way you oscillate and vibrate between these two extremes, these opposite factors. Or say sleeping and waking; you sleep in order to wake and you wake in order to sleep: in this way your life goes on. Or, a Buddhist would say, also, you oscillate between rebirth and death. You are born, only to die; you die, only to be reborn. Backwards and forwards you go.

So here, in this first type, this first mode of conditionality, the reactive or cyclical, the mind oscillates or vibrates between opposite states. The mind is never at rest. At the same time, though it is never at rest, it is never truly going forward. And this is the state of most us most of the time, as a little honest reflection will very

quickly reveal. We oscillate, we vibrate all the time between these pairs of opposites, these extremes. We know no rest, but at the same time, we move not an inch forward.

Progressive, or cyclic conditionality

Now the second type of conditionality the progressive, or the spiral, is rather different. It consists in a process of cumulative - we have to use the word reaction because we've got no better - between factors which are not pairs of opposites, but which augment one another, the succeeding factor augmenting the effect of the preceding factor. So that if, for instance, you experience A, you don't react to Non-A, you react to A+, and from A+ to A + more - A1, A2, A3 and so on. In other words, to give an illustration, if you experience pleasure in this sequence, from pleasure you react not to pain, but to happiness; from happiness you react not to unhappiness, but to rapture; from rapture you react not to despair but to bliss and so on. There is a progressive, a cumulative series here; a spiral series, not a reactive and cyclical one. Now here, we find as compared with the first type of conditionality, a steady forward advance; a real progression.

So these are the two great kinds or types of conditionality, according to the Buddha's teaching; the reactive and the progressive; the cyclical and the spiral.

And in the material world we find only the cyclical type of conditionality at work or operative. We find in the material world, in the phenomenal world generally, that everything sooner or later, passes over into its opposite and then back again. But in the mental and in the spiritual world, we find both types of conditionality - the cyclical and the spiral - are active and operative.

Now the cyclical type of conditionality, the action and reaction between factors which are pairs of opposites, is symbolised by what we call in Buddhism the Wheel of Life, most familiar in its Tibetan form as the Tibetan Wheel of Life. The Wheel of Life is not just a pretty picture on a monastery wall: the Wheel of Life shows us accurately and minutely the way in which our minds work when they revolve between the pairs of opposites.

The spiral type of conditionality is represented or symbolised by the stages or the sequence of the stages of the Path to Enlightenment. This path shows how the mind grows in a cumulative fashion from lower to higher states of being and of consciousness.

Now at this point a brief explanatory reference to the Wheel of Life may be of some help, of some assistance. Some of you may have seen pictures, either originals or reproductions, of this Tibetan Wheel of Life. If you look at it, you will see that at the centre, the hub of the Wheel, as it were, there are three animals depicted; a cock, a snake and a pig. These represent or symbolise the three principal aspects of the reactive mind.

The cock represents the reaction of craving. The snake represents the reaction of aversion or anger or hatred, and the pig represents the reaction of mental and spiritual blindness and ignorance.

And if you look a little more closely you will see that each animal is biting the tail of the one in front. And this also has a meaning - it means that craving, aversion and delusion are all interconnected - you can't have one without having the others as well. So these are the three principal aspects of the reactive mind - the mind which reacts to pleasant experiences with craving; to unpleasant ones with aversion and to those which are neither pleasant nor painful with simple indifference based upon mental and spiritual blindness and ignorance.

Then if you look a little more at the Tibetan Wheel of Life you will see round the hub, a circle, the first circle, which is divided into two segments; a white half and a black half. On the left hand side, on the white segment, you will see people going in an upward direction, with happy peaceful expressions. And on the right hand side, on the black segment, you see them plunging downwards with expressions of horror and despair. So these two halves, these two segments, represent of course the ethical life and the unethical life.
But there is an interesting point here: all this is within the Wheel; the truly spiritual man can never become unspiritual; but the man who is merely good in the conventional ethical or religious sense, can become bad. So on this level, in this circle, good can change into bad; bad can change into good. So this suggests, this conveys, as it were, that the conventionally good or religious life is all included inside the Wheel of Life: this is part of the reactive mind - this is not the truly religious or spiritual life.

Now the second circle, outside the two black and white halves, is divided into five or six segments and these are the five or the six (sometimes they are reckoned as five and sometimes as six) spheres or planes of rebirth according to traditional Buddhist cosmology. These spheres are those of:

* men
* hungry spirits
* animals
* divine beings
* titans
* beings in states of torment.

Now the third and outermost circle is divided into twelve segments, representing the Twelve Nidanas or links, and in the Tibetan Wheel of Life each is illustrated with a little picture, but we won't go into all that this evening as it doesn't directly concern us. But these twelve links or Nidanas of this outermost circle explain in detail the workings of the cyclical type of conditionality on the level of the individual mind.

At this point you may find it helpful to look at the chart. You will see on the chart the twelve Nidanas. The lower, principal circle is not meant to illustrate the Wheel of Life; this is a different diagrammatic presentation. But you will find, as in the Wheel of Life, in this circle, the twelve Nidanas in the outermost of all these circles.

You will see that number one, the first Nidana, the first link, is *avidya*, which means spiritual blindness, and unawareness and ignorance. And this is in the past life, the previous life. In dependence upon this spiritual blindness or ignorance, there arise various *samskaras*, which are activities productive of *karma*, the results of which you have to reap at some time in the future. So these are the two links, the two Nidanas, the cause process of the past life. These are compared very often the first to the state of being drunk, and the second to the state of performing actions in that state of drunkenness. So overpowered by spiritual blindness and ignorance, *avidya*, we perform various actions of body, speech and mind, which are productive of *karma* which we call the *samskaras*. *Samskaras* are sometimes translated as karma formations or, as in this list, even the mental formations.

Now in dependence upon the ignorance and the ignorance-inspired activities of the previous life, there arises at the beginning of this life, in the womb of the mother, the nuclear consciousness, the initial seed or pulse of consciousness, if you like, *vijnana*. Then in dependence upon that, there arises fourthly, *nama-rupa*, or the entire psychophysical organism. In dependence on the nama-rupa, there arises fifthly the *sadayatanani*, or the six sense organs. In Buddhist psychology, the mind is, I'm afraid, degraded to a rather humble position and reckoned merely as a sixth sense. We don't regard in Buddhist psychology the ordinary mind as in any way superior to the eye or the ear or the nose, and so on. It's merely a sixth sense.

Then in dependence upon the six senses, arises, sixthly, when the six senses come into contact with their respective sense objects, *sparsa*, which means contact. Then in dependence upon contact there arises seventhly, feeling or *vedana*, which may be pleasant, or painful, or neutral. Then in dependence upon that feeling, especially in dependence upon pleasant feeling, there arises *trsna*, number eight, or craving. We start hankering after the pleasant experience, we react to it in that way. Then in dependence upon *trsna*, or craving, the thirst for the pleasant experience, there arises *upadana*, clinging or attachment. We start getting attached to the pleasant side of life, clinging onto our pleasant experiences. Then in dependence on that clinging or attachment there arises number ten; *bhava*, becoming or coming to be, or the process of being conditioned by your own limitations, your own clinging, your own attachment. So this is the last link, the last Nidana of the present life.

Then in dependence upon that there arises, as the first Nidana of the next life, the future life, *jati*, number eleven, or birth. Then in dependence upon that again, arises number twelve, *jara-marana*, or old age, disease and death. In this way, the whole process goes on.

Now as you'll see from the chart and as I've already mentioned, these twelve links, these twelve Nidanas, are distributed over three lives. We have *avidya* and the *samskaras*, one and two, in the previous life; and then *vijnana, nama-rupa, sadayatanani, sparsa, vedana, trsna, upadana* and *bhava* in the present life; and *jati* and *jara-marana*, numbers eleven and twelve, in the future life. But though the twelve links are distributed in this way over all three lives, one should also remember that all twelve of them are present and operative in our ordinary, cyclical mode of consciousness all the time - every instant, every minute of the day.

Now if you take another look, if you look more closely still, you'll find that the twelve Nidanas are divided among what we call the cause process and the effect process.

Nidanas are of two kinds;

* either those which are causes of future results, or
* those which are the results of previous causes.

So you get groups alternating in this way; a karma group (or an action group) and then a result group; then an action group and again a result group.

So if we look at them in this way, from this point of view, we find that Nidanas one and two, that is to say, *avidya* and *samskara*, the ignorance and the activities based on ignorance, these constitute the karma process, or the action process, of the past. It's because of doing these things, entertaining this ignorance and performing these *samskaras*, it's because of these actions, setting up this action process, that we experience the result process which follows, which consists of *vijnana*, consciousness; *nama-rupa*, the psychophysical organism; *sadayatanani* or the six sense organs; *sparsa* or contact; and *vedana* or feeling. These five *Nidanas* make up the result process of the present life. We experience these five *Nidanas* on account of having performed the previous two Nidanas in the previous life.

Then following upon *vedana*, we get *trsna*, or craving; *upadana* or clinging or attachment; and *bhava*, or coming to be. These three make up the cause process of the present life, because they set into motion effects which we shall experience in the future.

And in the future life, we have *jati*, or birth; and *jara-marana*, or old age, disease and death. These represent the result or effect process of the future life.

So in this way we have, we may say, the cause process of the past, made up of Nidanas one and two; the effect process of the present, made up of Nidanas three to seven, then the cause process of the present, made up of Nidanas eight to ten; and the effect process of the future, made up of Nidanas eleven and twelve.

So you see here among the twelve Nidanas you get an alternation of cause/effect, cause/effect; action/reaction; action/reaction, going on all the time in this cyclical mode or progression, illustrating the workings of this type of conditionality at the level of the individual mind.

Now if you look again, and there are lots of subtle points in this chart, you'll see that there are three junctures occurring where one process passes over into another.

You'll see there is a juncture between Nidanas two and three. This of course is the juncture of death - the juncture between the previous life and the present life. Then you'll see there is a juncture between feeling and craving; between *vedana* and *trsna*, *vedana* being the last Nidana of the effect process of the present life and *trsna*, or craving, being the first Nidana of the cause process of the present life. And then again there is a juncture between ten and eleven, between *bhava*, or coming to be; and *jati* or birth. In other words, a juncture between the last Nidana of the present life and the first Nidana of the future life. So in this way we get these three junctures.

But it is the middle one which is of the greatest importance; the juncture occurring between Nidanas seven and eight; between *vedana* or feeling and *trsna*, or craving. It's at this little point, according to the Buddha's teaching, that all the trouble begins. It's at this point that the trouble begins because in dependence upon feeling, there arises *trsna*, or craving. This is the crucial point. So because the trouble, as it were, arises here, the trouble can also be made to end here, just at this point.

Vedana, feeling, stands for all the experiences of the external world by which we are confronted. All the time, sense impressions, mental impressions are pouring in; we see visual forms, we hear sounds; smells, tastes, sensations of touch, ideas are presented to us - all the time, all these sensations, all these impressions, are pouring in upon us. And we react to them all.

And how do we react? For the most part, if not entirely, we react automatically with craving, we react with aversion, we react with fear, we react with jealousy, we react with craving - we react in all these ways and we react like this all the time. And in this way, the whole cyclical process continues. In this way, the Wheel of Life continues to revolve. So this, according to the Buddha's teaching, is the psychology of the reactive mind. This is the psychology of oscillation, we may say - the psychology of bondage.

So how is this process of the reactive mind to be stopped? How is one to check the revolutions of the Wheel?

There are two methods, according to Buddhism - one is called the **sudden** method, and the other is called the **gradual** method.

Both represent in different ways the psychology of the truly progressive mind, the mind which develops spiritually. In other words, they represent the psychology of spiritual development, the psychology of Liberation.

The sudden method is illustrated by an incident, a very significant incident, in the life of the Buddha. It is said that in the days of the Buddha, there was a monk called Bahia, who lived right on the west coast of India. He'd been ordained, become a monk, he'd practised meditation, and so on, without ever having seen the Buddha. But one day a great desire, a great aspiration, arose in his mind to go to where the Buddha was and see him. He'd heard so much about him, heard how wonderful he was, how Enlightened, how compassionate, so he thought I must go and see my teacher's teacher. So he packed up his belongings, that is to say, his spare robe and his begging bowl, and off he went on foot. So one week, two weeks, three weeks, about a month, it took him and he came to Sravasti, where the Buddha was staying.

He arrived at the Buddha's monastery at about ten or eleven in the morning and upon making enquiries he found that the Buddha had already gone to the nearby village in order to beg his supply of food for the day. So Bahia was so keen on meeting the Buddha that he didn't wait; he just set off in the direction indicated to find the Buddha. So he hastened into the village, and sure enough, hadn't gone along for more than a few minutes when he saw this very slow and very stately figure moving very gently ahead, going from one door to the next, just standing for a few minutes with his begging bowl in his hand, and waiting for a few morsels of rice and curry to be put into it, and then moving on to the next house.
So so great was Bahia's eagerness to see the Buddha and to receive a teaching that he went straight up behind him and without waiting, without a word of introduction, because these matters one might say are desperate matters, he just said to the Buddha, "Lord, give me a teaching!" He thought, "(Well, I've got the Buddha here - I may never have this opportunity again! So there is no time to waste telling him my name and where I've come from and what the weather is like, what my teacher said and so on -) Lord, give me a teaching!"

So, the Buddha's practice was that when he was on his alms round, when he was in the course of his begging, he would never speak. He would maintain absolute silence. So the Buddha said nothing, he just moved on, without taking the slightest notice of Bahia. Bahia wasn't to be put off - he just moved along behind the Buddha, and again he said, "Lord, give me a teaching!" The Buddha took no notice whatever, still; he just moved on. But Bahia a third time, very desperately now, put his request, saying, "Lord, give me a teaching." The Buddha's rule or principle was that if you asked him a question, even unto the third time, whatever it was, however terrible the answer, how disastrous for you, he'd reply. So he just turned round and gave Bahia what the Scriptures call an 'elephant look' - looked at him just like an elephant, and he said to Bahia "In the seen, only the seen; in the heard, only the heard; in the tasted, only the tasted; in the touched, only the touched; in the thought, only the thought." And he turned round and went on his way, continued begging. And Bahia, we are told, became Enlightened on the spot.

I don't know how many people became Enlightened just now - but some may be wondering what the Buddha meant: "In the seen, only the seen; in the heard, only the heard;" - what does he mean by that? The Buddha meant by that, cultivate towards all phenomena, towards all experiences, an attitude of pure awareness - <u>don't react</u>. When you see something, just see it. Just see it - don't start thinking "What is it? Oh, that's a tree - I suppose I could cut it down," or "Yes, some fruit are growing, I'd like to eat those." You see, at once the reactive mind starts working. So the Buddha says "In the seen, only the seen": Just look! Just see! Don't react! When you hear a sound, just hear - don't react! Just have the pure impression with nothing coming in from your side - no subjective reaction. Be just like a mirror, just reflecting everything. Without any distortion, without adding anything of your own whatsoever. Be purely aware, purely objective - don't react. Just stop reaction on the spot, as it were.

So Bahia, fortunate man, was able to do this. He just saw what the Buddha meant, immediately cut off all his reactions - in the seen, only saw the seen; in the heard, only the heard; and therefore on the spot, he was Enlightened. So anyone who adopts this attitude, who on the spot, as though with a sword, can just cut off all reaction, not react to anything, just mirror with perfect objectivity all impressions, all sensations - that person can gain Enlightenment. But this is of course, as you can well imagine, very, very difficult indeed. This is for, as it were, spiritual heroes, not so much for ordinary people.

But there's a gradual method, as I've already suggested, a gradual method which is represented by what we call the Twelve Positive Nidanas.

The Twelve Positive Nidanas wind up and out of the Wheel of Life from the second juncture - from in between *vedana* or feeling, and *trsna*, thirst or craving. And these twelve positive Nidanas are a sequence or series of

twelve progressive states of being and consciousness. And they represent, as a sequence or as a series, the whole process of the transition from the *Samsara*, from mundane existence, from this world, to *Nirvana*.

They are not exactly the stages of a path, though we do and can refer to them, as stages - they are much more like stages of growth or development, the succeeding stage arising in dependence on the preceding one, growing out of it, out of its abundance, out of its fullness, as it were, so that no stage of growth can be by-passed.

Let us examine each of these in turn - and in this way we shall gain some insight into the psychology of spiritual development according to Buddhism.

You'll notice that the sequence, the series of twelve positive Nidanas begins with suffering. And suffering in this sequence of positive Nidanas corresponds to *vedana*, or feeling, among the twelve reactive, or cyclical, Nidanas. We may say, we can approach it in this way, that it is through suffering, through experiences of suffering, through the pain and the stress of human existence that we become aware. Very often, unfortunately, we are most aware when we are most suffering. When we have it too easy, when we have it too good, very often we lapse into spiritual forgetfulness and unawareness. But pain very often, and again I say unfortunately, stings and startles us out of this somnolent state and we begin to become aware, and as you know, without awareness, there is no spiritual life. Indeed, we may say that without awareness there is no truly human life. Without awareness, a man is just a mass of blind animal reactions, cyclical reactions, and we may say, humanoid, rather than human.

Now in Sanskrit, as you will see, the word for suffering is *dukkha*. But *dukkha* is not just painful experience - cutting your finger or having a toothache - *dukkha* also means or covers the unsatisfactoriness of ordinary life - even pleasant experiences, even these, are ultimately not very satisfactory. They are ultimately unsatisfying. Even very often we find in the midst of something we most appreciate, something we most enjoy, there is some little corner of the heart which is not filled, which is not satisfied, which hankers after something more, something greater, something beyond.

This was certainly the Buddha's original experience in the days when he dwelled at home with his parents, and his wife. He had everything, we may say - everything that the world could give, everything the world could offer - he had it in abundance. But he was unsatisfied. There was a corner in his heart which those things could not fill. So it was to fill it, to find something to fill that corner, that he left home, struggled for six years and eventually found something which did fill that corner - that is to say, his experience of Supreme Enlightenment.

So this sort of experience is the experience, we may say, of many people. In the midst even of the things they most enjoy, even when they are with the people they most like, or doing the things they most enjoy doing, there's some little corner of the heart which is empty and unfilled. So therefore there's a certain grain of dissatisfaction in everything that they do and everything that they experience. But most of us, unfortunately smother this over - we either pretend it's not there, or say, "Well it ought to be there, so I suppose it is, somewhere," and we tend to just cover it over.
But, we may say that instead of doing this, we should even cherish our dissatisfaction; allow this little empty hole or corner to remain unfilled until we find that which alone can really fill it. And it's because of this inner or, at least, underlying dissatisfaction or emptiness, as it were, that we feel restless, and because we feel restless, we go in search of something more, something higher. Something which at first we don't know what. We're searching, but we don't know what we're searching for; we are groping, but we don't know what we are groping for - we are, as it were, groping in the dark. But eventually, if we search for long enough, we contact, we come up against, something which we may describe as higher, or come up against something which is a symbol of something higher - we may read a book or we may see a picture or an image or we may meet a person or have an experience which suggests or which convinces us that there *is* something beyond or higher which can fill that empty nook or corner in our heart. And at once, when we come up against it or encounter it, we feel a response. We know at once, in familiar words, "This is IT." This is our experience.

And this response, this heartfelt response when we come up against something higher, something beyond, some symbol of something higher, this response is what in Buddhism we call *sraddha*, or faith. Faith, you will see, is the second of the positive Nidanas. In this way, in the Buddha's words, "In dependence upon *dukkha*, in dependence upon suffering, there arises faith, *sraddha*."

Now this *sraddha*, this faith, is not just belief, not believing something to be true. It's not even an emotional state. We may say that *sraddha* in this sense, in this context, is the response of our total being, of what is ultimate in us to what is ultimate in the universe.

And for Buddhism, of course, faith is specifically faith in what we call *The Three Jewels*: -the Buddha, the Dharma and the Sangha, which represent the highest values of existence - the ultimate values, for the sake of which all other things exist. The Buddha, representing the ultimate spiritual ideal of Enlightenment; the Dharma, representing the Path or the course of the higher evolution - the whole spiral mode of progression; and the Sangha, the spiritual community within which the path is followed and spiritual development takes place. So faith in Buddhism is our total response to these values; Buddha, Dharma and Sangha. And that response manifests in an actual positive commitment which we call in Buddhism Going for Refuge: Going for Refuge to the Buddha - accepting him as teacher; Going for Refuge to the Dharma - accepting that as one's way of life; and Going for Refuge to the Sangha - finding oneself in the midst of a spiritual community of people following the same path, to realise the same objective and ideal.

Now next we find, two to three, that in dependence on faith there arises joy. Joy, or as we may also translate it, delight, is the third positive Nidana. We've found, in this stage, what we were looking for, or at least, we've begun to find it, so we feel pleased and we feel contented. We feel full of gratitude and devotion, and at this stage, many people have the experience that they want to show their gratitude or their devotion, so some even start practising various devotional exercises, like offering flowers to the Buddha image, or lighting sticks of incense or chanting and so on. But this is all to express the inner joy and happiness and gratitude which they feel and experience in this particular stage. Also in this stage, they feel very great love and devotion for their spiritual teachers and so on.

But more even than that, in this stage the joy, the delight which they experience begins to transform their lives. Contact with the spiritual which they experience at this stage begins to transform their lives. And the chief effect of this is that they become less and less self-centred. They get a little bit "weaned away" from themselves - they become more generous, more open-hearted and open-handed and also their lower nature starts coming under control, especially as I explained a few weeks ago, in matters such as food and sex and sleep. And people start leading therefore a comparatively harmless and simple and sane life. And this too, makes us feel happy, contented and carefree - at peace with ourselves.

We enjoy at this stage what we may call a good conscience. This doesn't mean, of course, that we are complacent, but it means that we know within ourselves that we are on the right path. Buddhism attaches great importance to this stage and this experience, and this is why I have dwelt a little upon it. Buddhism teaches, psychologically, that a bad conscience, not being on good terms with yourself, or not approving of yourself, or the sort of unconscious or half conscious awareness that you've done something you shouldn't have done or have left undone something you should have done - this blocks further progress. Therefore in Buddhism we have, in some traditions at least, services of confession in the course of which we confess or admit our various faults or even sins, as for instance in our Seven-fold Puja, when we admit and confess our faults in front of all the Buddhas. And in this way the feeling of guilt is purged away, and our original feeling of joy and delight is restored and we can go on with our spiritual progress.

Then, three and four, in dependence upon that joy arises rapture. Rapture, in Sanskrit, is *priti*, and this is an emotion of very intense joy indeed. In fact we could even translate this word not so much as rapture, as ecstasy. And the characteristic of *priti* is that it is experienced not only mentally, but also physically, in the physical body. There is a reaction in the physical body, as we will see a little later on. There are five degrees of intensity of *priti.*

In the first, there is just a sort of slight thrill - just a little thrill of ecstasy and the physical reaction or the physical accompaniment of that is that the hairs of the body all stand on end.

The second type of priti is a momentary but electrifying stimulation. You can get a sudden sort of flash of ecstasy, but it's just like a flash of lightening: it's here, and before you can absorb it, or before you can even recover from it, it's gone. A sort of flash of ecstasy.

Then thirdly, what is described as a flooding emotion of ecstasy which descends on the whole body not just once, but again and again, like the breaking of ocean waves on the sea shore.

Then fourthly, the fourth kind of ecstasy in which the whole body is surcharged, just like a mountain cave being swept by a mighty flood of water - this is the traditional comparison.

And the fifth and last kind of *priti* or ecstasy is what is called the transporting, in which the body is even in some cases, physically lifted from the ground, and what we call levitation occurs.

Now these are the five kinds of *priti*, from the lowest to the highest, but we can say that most people in the course of their lives, have had some experience of *priti.* They might not have been lifted from the ground, literally (but they might have felt like it, sometimes!) but most people have had some experience of priti, some experience of this kind of ecstasy, as for instance when you see a beautiful sunset, or you hear a beautiful piece of music and you're so deeply moved by it that a lump comes into your throat and tears come into your eyes - this is, in its own way, an experience of *priti*, an experience of ecstasy.

So *priti* is like this, but very much more intense, especially when it is heightened by the practice of meditation.

Then, four and five, in dependence on rapture arises pacification, or calm. This is a higher stage still. In Sanskrit, this is *prasrabdhi*, or in Pali, *passaddhi*, and it literally means calming down or pacification. And it is so called because in this stage, there is a calming down, a pacification, of the physical side-effects of rapture. The hair no longer stands on end, the body no longer feels flooded - not because the rapture has become less, but because it has become more. It has become greater, but because your spiritual experience has expanded, has become profounder, so you can, as it were, contain it and assimilate it better, it doesn't as it were, overflow onto the physical plane.

There's a comparison given here - it is said to be like an elephant stepping down into a small pond. You all know how big an animal an elephant is: well, if it steps down into a small pond to take its bath, say a pond not much bigger than this table, what happens? All the water splashes out at the sides. But if the elephant goes down into a great river, and lowers itself down at the edge, there's hardly a ripple. So the elephant descending into the pond is like one's experience of *priti*, ecstasy - there's a great external physical disturbance because of one's limited experience and practice. But the elephant going down into the great river with hardly a ripple is like one's experience of *prasrabdhi* - calming down or pacification - where one's spiritual experience has expanded, become more ample, so that even though the rapture, the ecstasy, is there, it is all absorbed and contained within, internally; it doesn't show itself in its various physical manifestations or innervations, in the nervous system and so on.

Then five and six - in dependence upon pacification arises bliss. This is a state of pure, intense happiness, purely internal, without any physical manifestation, as in the ecstasy or rapture. And it represents what we may describe as the complete unification of all the emotional energies . All the emotional energies have been made positive, been transmuted, all made to flow together into one great harmonious stream. So that in this stage there is the experience not only of bliss, but of peace and love, and joy and so on. In this state there are no negative emotions - no hate, no fear, no craving - certainly not in the conscious mind, and perhaps, very very slightly, even in the unconscious mind.

Then, six and seven, in dependence on bliss arises concentration. This is quite interesting. The word in the original for concentration is *Samadhi*. *Samadhi* has got a number of meanings, but here it means concentration. And this experience, this stage, is based on an important psychological principle, which is that when one is completely happy, when all one's emotional energies are unified, when nothing overflows or leaks away, then one is concentrated. A concentrated person, we may say, is a happy person. If you're unhappy, you're restless. If you're happy, you're concentrated, you're absorbed, either within or without. And we may also say, further, that the happier we are, the longer we can stay concentrated, because the less need there is for us to change over to some other thing.

Now this connection between happiness and concentration or bliss and concentration, is illustrated by another story from the Scriptures. One day a certain king went to see, to call upon, the Buddha. And the king was perhaps a little boastful, and the discussion arose between them as to who was the more happy, the king or the Buddha. The king, of course, was convinced that he was the more happy. He thought, "Well, it's obvious - I've got all those palaces, I've got this army and all this treasure, and all these women," - 300 of them he brought along even to meet the Buddha. So he thought, "Surely I'm more happy than the Buddha is!" So the Buddha said, "No, I'm more happy than you are." The king wasn't convinced by this, so he said, "All right, you just prove it - you just convince me of that." So the Buddha said, "All right, I'll ask you a question. Just sit here, cross-legged, eyes closed. Do you feel happy?" The king said, "Yes, of course, quite happy." So the Buddha said, "All right, supposing you were to sit like this for an hour. Would you still be quite happy?" And the king said, "Yes." So the Buddha said, "All right, suppose you were to sit here for the whole day, just like that - would you be quite happy?" The king said, "Er, well, I might be." So the Buddha said, "All right, what about a week. Could you sit for a week?" So the king had nothing to say. He had no answer to this. So the Buddha said, "Well, in my case, not only for an hour, not only for a day, but for seven days and seven nights I can sit here without moving, enjoying uninterruptedly perfect bliss and perfect happiness."

Now the king could not sit concentrated in that way for as long as the Buddha because he was less happy than the Buddha. Concentration depends upon happiness - in other words, in unification of emotional energies.

Now all this is related to our own practice of meditation. Mediation begins with concentration. A number of you are coming to our various meditation classes, and it's well known that most people find concentration rather difficult. And it's really because they're not very happy - they don't enjoy it. And they don't enjoy it because their emotional energies are not unified. Some of their emotional energy is leaking away here, some is leaking away there; there's very little left for the meditation practice. So therefore they have to make a tremendous effort and have to struggle and, as it were, forcibly fix their mind on the concentration object. But that is not really the way. There's a danger here that if one with emotional energies un-unified forcibly tries with a conscious effort of will to fix the mind on a point and hold it there, there's a danger of a reaction from the unconscious mind. That's why very often people who go for meditation retreat weeks or even for a few days, if they go without proper preparation - if they dash straight off from the office or after a hectic time at the seaside or something like that - straight off to the meditation centre perhaps without having perhaps meditated for two or three weeks, and then think, "Right, now I'll get down to it," and they forcibly put their mind on the object for one hour, two hours, three hours - then the mind starts kicking. There's a reaction, because the emotional energies have not been unified in that particular direction, and they experience a lot of difficulty and a lot of trouble.

And this is why the preparation for meditation is so important. In the course of the preparation for meditation, the various preparations, we disengage our psychological energies from other things and we direct them all in one channel, as it were. And when we are fully prepared, the concentration exercises that we do, the objects that we take up, just get the finishing touch. If all our emotional energies are flowing together, if they are unified, then when we sit to just look at our breath, to become aware of the breath going in and out, automatically we're concentrated - with no struggle and no effort, hardly at all.

Now, seven and eight, in dependence on concentration arises Knowledge And Vision of Things As They Really Are. In other words, there arises Insight into Reality. And this stage is of the utmost, indeed of crucial importance, because it marks the transition from meditation to wisdom, from the psychological to the truly spiritual, or better, to the transcendental.

Here, in this stage we start escaping from the 'gravitational pull' of Samsara and we start feeling the 'gravitational pull' of Nirvana in the opposite direction. And hereafter, from this stage, this eighth stage, the eighth positive Nidana, there is no falling back - the attainment of Enlightenment is assured.

Now Knowledge And Vision Of Things As They Really Are is twofold, corresponding to the first two kinds of *sunyata*, or voidness. Those who were here last week will remember the Abhidharma distinction between Unconditioned dharmas and conditioned dharmas.

The first kind of *sunyata* consists of the emptiness of the conditioned dharmas in respect of the Unconditioned. In other words, *Nirvana*, the Unconditioned dharma, is not to be found in *Samsara*, the collection of the conditioned dharmas. Conditioned existence - the conditioned dharmas - are impermanent, unsatisfactory and unreal. So *Nirvana*, which has the opposite characteristics, is not to be found in the *Samsara*. The conditioned is empty with regard to the Unconditioned, or *Nirvana*.

The second kind of *sunyata* is the emptiness of the Unconditioned in respect of the conditioned. Just as *Nirvana* is not to be found in *Samsara, Samsara* is not to be found in *Nirvana.* Unconditioned existence is characterised by permanence - it's above time - it's supremely blissful and it is ultimately real; characteristics which one does not find among the conditioned dharmas. So just as the conditioned is empty, as it were, with regard to the Unconditioned, the Unconditioned is empty with regard to the conditioned. These are the first two kinds of *sunyata.*

So Knowledge And Vision Of Things As They Really Are consists in seeing this; seeing it clearly, not just an intellectual understanding, but a direct perception and experience, which means that one's whole outlook and attitude is radically changed. One's whole being, one's whole life is centred upon and oriented towards, the Unconditioned rather than the conditioned. One's whole outlook is changed.

Then, eight and nine, in dependence upon Knowledge And Vision Of Things As They Really Are, arises withdrawal. This is sometimes translated as revulsion or disgust, but this is much too psychological - one has gone above and beyond reactions of this sort. This is just a smooth movement of withdrawal from involvement in things that we have seen through, by which we are no longer deluded. It's like seeing a mirage in a desert - when you realise it's a mirage, you're no longer interested. It may look very beautiful, the fruits on the trees may look very tempting, but you're no longer deceived, and no longer deluded. So withdrawal represents, we may

say, an attitude of 'sitting loose to life' - not really being involved. Not taking it all too seriously. Doing what is objectively necessary, but not getting subjectively caught up.

Then, nine and ten, in dependence on withdrawal arises dispassion. Withdrawal, we may say, is the actual movement of detachment from conditioned existence. Dispassion is the fixed state, the permanent state, of being detached. Here, in this state, we cannot be moved by any worldly happening or experience. This is a state of complete imperturbability, just like that of the Buddha sitting under the Bodhi tree and repulsing the armies of Mara, the Evil One.

Then ten and eleven, in dependence on dispassion arises freedom. Nowadays there's very much talk about freedom of various kinds, and only too often we're tempted to think that freedom means freedom to do as one likes. But the Buddhist conception of freedom is quite different.

In Buddhism, freedom is twofold; *citta vimutti*, or freedom of mind, consisting in complete freedom from all subjective emotional bias; and *prajna vimutti*, or freedom of wisdom, which consists of freedom from all wrong views - ignorance, unawareness, and so on. And this freedom is the ultimate goal and objective of Buddhism. This freedom is synonymous with Enlightenment. And the Buddha says in one place, "Just as the great ocean has but one taste, the taste of salt, so my teaching has one flavour, the flavour of freedom", or liberation, or emancipation.

Then eleven and twelve, in dependence on freedom arises Knowledge Of The Destruction Of The *Asravas*. One isn't only free, here one knows that one is free. Free from the *asravas*. This is, we may say, one of the most untranslatable words in the whole of Buddhism. It means a sort of mental poison that floods the mind. There are three asravas: -

* *kama asrava*, or the poison of desire for sensuous experience;
* *bhavasrava*, or desire for any form of conditioned existence, even existence on a higher plane as a god, angel and so on, or heavenly being;
* *avijjasrava*, or poison of spiritual ignorance or unawareness.

When these are extinct, when one knows that they are extinct, then one is free, one is truly Enlightened, one has gained Buddhahood.

Now these - and we've come a very long way; traversed a lot of ground rather rapidly, I'm afraid - these are the twelve positive Nidanas, the twelve stages of the spiral, winding from between feeling and craving all the way up to Enlightenment, all the way to Nirvana, as you will see from the chart.

This whole great sequence or series of states and experiences constitutes what we call, in the language of this evening's talk, the psychology of spiritual development: a development of which each and every one of us present here this evening is capable, if only we make the effort.