

## Lecture 131: A Method of Personal Development

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Mr. Chairman and Friends;

What we have come to know as 'Buddhism' - but which, in the countries where it has been prevalent for the last so many hundreds of years, is more often known as 'The Dharma' or 'The Sasana' - has been known now, we may say, in the West; in Europe and in America; for considerably more than one hundred years, and one might have thought that, in the course of that one hundred and more years, Buddhism would have come to be, at least in some quarters, at least in some circles, tolerably well-known, but, unfortunately, we have to confess that that is by no means the case. Buddhism, even after the passage of one hundred years; even after the labours, the researches, the investigations, the expositions, of so many scholars; is still not well known.

In fact we could even go so far as to say that, far from being well-known, Buddhism is, Buddhism has become, the subject of many misunderstandings. Some people, for instance, still classify Buddhism as one of the various religions of the world. You can read all sorts of books on comparative religion and you'll find Buddhism listed there along with all the other 'isms', some of them of historical importance, others, perhaps not of any importance at all.

And similarly, one finds that for some people Buddhism is simply a sort of mysterious distant exotic oriental cult. Or even, for others again, Buddhism is a system of abstract philosophical ideas; something quite remote from ordinary life; something not touching life, not impinging on life, at any point.

Others again - and this is, or at least used to be, a very widespread misunderstanding - others again think of Buddhism as simply a code of ethics: that Buddhism tells you simply what you should do; or rather, what you should **not** do, that you shouldn't do this; you shouldn't do that. Buddhism appears for these people simply as a system, a list even, of ethical rules, even prohibitions.

And again - and this is something I discovered still very much in the air when I came back from India (initially some twelve or so years ago) - for many people, Buddhism is a form of asceticism. I remember in those days people used to come and see me at Hampstead, where I was staying, and they were very surprised to find that there were no high walls surrounding the building where I was staying and no barbed wire, and that everybody could enter freely and talk to whoever happened to be living there. They expected that we would be completely secluded from the world, inaccessible and remote, and not holding, in fact, any commerce with the world at all, living in a sort of perpetual solemn silence. So this was the sort of impression that prevailed; that Buddhism was something rather negative, rather repressive, something life-denying, as it were.

Leaving aside all these sort of more general misunderstandings, we can say that, for other people again, Buddhism has come to be identified with one or another of its specific forms. For instance, they encounter the Buddhism of South-East Asia; they encounter the Buddhism of Ceylon, say the Theravada, and they think this is Buddhism, ignoring all the other forms. Or they come into contact with that very, very colourful, that very rich and that very precious form of Buddhism: that is to say, Tibetan Buddhism; and they're carried away by their feelings for Lamas and thigh-bone trumpets and little drums and thangkas and all the rest of that colourful Tantric paraphernalia and they think that this is Buddhism; just this, and nothing more. And then again, some of them get wafted away by some kind of Japanese or pseudo-Japanese dream; they read the works of Dr. Suzuki, they start trying to solve koans and they think 'Zen! Zen is Buddhism'. All the other schools, all the other teachings, they're just not Buddhism at all - Zen is the real thing. Zen is Buddhism! So here's a further misunderstanding. Buddhism is misunderstood in the sense that it's identified with just one or another of its specific forms; its particular cultural variants; which is rather like identifying the oak tree, the **whole** oak tree, with just one single branch, or even, in some cases, with one single acorn.

So in view of all these misunderstandings - and I've just touched on some of the more prominent, some of the more popular, misunderstandings - in view of all these misunderstandings we could in fact say that Buddhism is not yet really known in the West at all. Sometimes there's a great danger in being just slightly acquainted with something or someone, because then we tend to overlook the fact that we don't really know it at all. A little learning is really a very dangerous thing; it's better perhaps, in some cases, under some circumstances, not to have any such learning at all. So perhaps we have to face up to the fact that

in the West, we don't really yet know Buddhism at all. So perhaps we'd better, as it were, wipe the slate clean - wipe it clean of all our misunderstandings, all our misinterpretations - and make a completely fresh start. Perhaps that would be best. Perhaps it would be best to assume that nobody really knows anything about Buddhism, in the West, and that perhaps we do have to make - after all those years, even after a century - a completely fresh start. To take, as it were, a completely fresh, a completely new look at Buddhism. And this, we may say, is what the FWBO was founded for in 1967, and what it tries to do. It tries to take, as it were, this completely new look. It tries to make this completely fresh start. It tries to make Buddhism, after all this time, truly known in the West. It tries to lift it, we may say, out of the rut - the rut which I found it in some twelve years ago - of little groups that met here and there just once a week or so, simply to talk about Buddhism and nothing more than that. It exists, we may say, to cut the Buddha's teaching down to its absolute essentials and to make those essentials really relevant to people's lives.

So that it was for reasons such as this that the Friends of the Western Buddhist Order was founded in 1967; which is nine years ago. Nine years ago! To some of us it seems a lifetime, because we may say in the course of the last nine years quite a lot has happened. These last nine years have been very rich indeed in event and in experience. And, of course, during that time, during those nine years, the FWBO has grown steadily. And when we say it's grown steadily, we don't mean simply that Centres have multiplied; we don't mean simply that we've become better known - though these things certainly have taken place. What we mean is that more and more individuals, as individuals, have committed themselves to the realisation of the ideals for which the Friends of the Western Buddhist Order stands.

In the course of these last nine years, we may say that the FWBO has discovered quite a lot about itself. It's not that you start off with, in all respects, a very clear-cut idea of what you're going to do; you learn what it is that you're trying to do in the process of trying to do it. So in the course of these last nine years, the FWBO has come to understand its own nature, we may say, somewhat more clearly than before; somewhat more clearly than it did - than **we** did - at the beginning. And in particular, in the course of these last nine years the FWBO has come to realise that it has four things to offer men and women in the West. Four things which are of greatest possible importance to them, as individuals, or as potential individuals. Four things that correspond, we may say, to their deepest and their truest needs.

So what are these four things? What are these four things that the FWBO has to offer? These are:  
First, we may say, **A Method of Personal Development**;  
Secondly, **A Vision of Human Existence**;  
Thirdly, **The Nucleus of a New Society**; and,  
Fourthly & lastly, **A Blueprint for a New World**.

And it's with these four things that this present short series of lectures will be concerned. In other words, in the course of these four lectures, in the course of these four meetings, we shall be trying to present the concentrated essence of Buddhism in a highly practical form; a form especially suited to the needs of Western man; needs which are fast becoming the needs of the whole world.

So tonight we find ourselves concerned with the first thing that the FWBO has to offer. We are concerned with 'A Method of Personal Development'. But at once a question arises, and it may already have arisen in your minds, and the question is: What do we mean by 'a Method of Personal Development' and why should people **need** one? Why should they need a method of personal development and, in any case, what exactly **is** development? This isn't perhaps as clear as it seems at first sight. What **is** development? What do we mean by this term? What does the intransitive verb 'to develop' really mean? If we take the help of the dictionary, we find that 'to develop' means to unfold, gradually, just as a flower unfolds, stage by stage, petal by petal, from the bud. To develop means to evolve; it means to pass through a succession of states or stages, each of which is prefatory to the next; it means to expand by a process of growth; it means to change gradually from a lower to a higher state of being. This is what is meant by 'to develop', what is meant by 'development'. And development - as we can very quickly see; as we can very quickly recognise - is the law of life. If we study, for instance, biology, we find that the unicellular organism develops into the multi-cellular organism; we find that the invertebrate develops into the vertebrate. We find, more specifically, that plant develops into fish, fish into reptile, reptile into mammal, and finally we find that the man-like ape becomes the ape-like man. We find that *Homo Pithecanthropus* becomes *Homo Sapiens*. Here the process of development is simply biological and what develops is simply the bodily structure, the bodily organization. It's only in the later stages of the process that we find any sign of self-consciousness, any sign of psychological, as distinct from biological, development.

Now the whole of that vast process which I have so summarily sketched - the process of development from amoeba up to man - makes up what we have come to call 'the Lower Evolution'. It represents, we may say, if we take a sort of bird's eye view of things, it represents the distance that life has travelled so far. And it's come a very, very long way; and it's a very interesting, a fascinating, story. But the process does not stop here, the story does not stop here, does not stop with man as we at present know him. The process goes on, the story goes on. Or rather, we may say, it **can** go on - not that it must, not that it will, but it **can**, go on. 'The Lower Evolution', as we call it, can be succeeded by what we call 'the Higher Evolution', which is the process by which man as he is at present; man as we know him; man as we are; becomes man as he can be. The process by which what we may call Natural man becomes Spiritual Man, by which Unenlightened Man becomes Enlightened Man, or Buddha. It's the process, we may say, by which man becomes that which - in a sense; in a deeply metaphysical sense - he always was.

Now the process of the Higher Evolution is continuous with the process of the Lower Evolution, but it is not simply a continuation of it, There are quite a number of important differences between the Lower Evolution on the one hand and the Higher Evolution on the other. In the first place, as I have already indicated, the Higher Evolution constitutes a process not of biological but of psychological development - even, we may say, of spiritual development. What now develops is not bodily structure, not bodily organisation; what develops is - for want of a better term - mind. And by mind one does not mean simply reason, one does not mean simply the rational faculty; by mind one means the intelligence, one means the higher emotions, the more refined emotions, one means the creative imagination, one means the spiritual intuition. It's all of these which grow, which develop, the growth **of** which, the development **of** which, constitutes the Higher Evolution,

so that we may say that this development, this evolution, which is the truly human development, consists essentially in the development of consciousness.

Now we use this word 'consciousness', which is, in a way, a very abstract word; but we mustn't think, when we speak of the development of consciousness, that we mean the development of some, as it were, abstract, general consciousness. By the development of consciousness we mean the development of the **individual** consciousness, the development of one's own consciousness, of my consciousness, of your consciousness. Human development therefore, we may say, is a personal development, it's my development, it's your development, it's **our** development, but not 'our' in the sense of some collective body - it's not a **corporate** development, not a collective development - but 'our' development in the sense of us as individuals, or potential individuals, together. We can no longer rely on our being carried forward by the surge of the general evolutionary process, as on the crest of an enormous wave. With man; at least with man at his best; self-consciousness has emerged, reflective consciousness has emerged, and henceforth he - we - can evolve only as individuals. And this means individually **wanting** to evolve and not simply wanting but **deciding** to evolve and taking appropriate action. An author who used to be very famous but who, I think, is not very much read these days - G. Lowes Dickinson - put the matter very clearly and very forcibly in his famous dialogue, 'A Modern Symposium'. He says - or rather, one of his characters in the dialogue says,

Man is in the making, but henceforth he must make himself. To that point Nature has led him out of the primeval slime. She has given him limbs, she has given him brain, she has given him the rudiment of a soul. Now it is for him to make or mar that splendid torso. Let him look no more to her for aid, for it is her will to create one who has the power to create himself. If he fails, she fails: back goes the metal to the pot and the great process begins anew. If he succeeds, he succeeds alone. His fate is in his own hands.

So let me repeat those last words: 'His fate is in his own hands'. These are momentous words indeed! They make it clear that we have a tremendous responsibility. We have a responsibility for our own life, a responsibility for our own growth, a responsibility for our own happiness. And sometimes that responsibility seems very heavy indeed. Sometimes, even, it seems too heavy for us to bear. So when it becomes as heavy as that - too heavy for us to bear - what do we sometimes do? Or what, at least, are we sometimes **tempted** to do? We are tempted to try to hand it over to somebody else. We start feeling how nice it would be, how comfortable it would be, if only we could hand over that responsibility for ourselves to somebody else; maybe to God or maybe to some fashionable Guru-figure, maybe even to some political or pseudo-political leader, in the hope that he will arrange it all for us with as little trouble to us as possible. And sometimes, of course, again, we just try - we may even do our best - to forget the whole question, the whole bothersome question of personal development. We ask ourselves, 'Why bother? Why bother with all this talk? Why bother with all this effort? Why bother with all these methods, these

practices? Why bother? Why not just sit back and enjoy life like an ordinary human being?' Especially when it's a fine summer day and you live in a place like Brighton and the beach is calling and your friends maybe want to take you out, you think, 'Well why bother? Why not just be an ordinary human being and forget all about this question of the Higher Evolution and Personal Development?' But fortunately or unfortunately, luckily or unluckily, once you've reached a certain point, once self-consciousness has really started to emerge, once you've **really** started to think, once you've really started to **feel**, once you've really started to **imagine**, you cannot really do that. You can't just put it all aside, you can't just forget this question, this problem, of development, you can't do that.

I've said that development is the law of life and this applies to the Higher as well as to the Lower Evolution. As living beings - and we are alive, I hope! - as living beings we want to grow, we want to develop, because what every living thing, what every living being, wants to do most of all is to fulfil the law of its own being, and the law of our being is - as it is the law of the being of every living thing - that we should develop. So we want to fulfil that law of our own being, we want to develop, we want to actualise our potential, our **deepest** potential. We want to become what we are. We want to achieve in time, as it were, what we are in eternity. And if, for any reason, if in any way, we are prevented from doing this; hindered from doing this, prevented from growing, prevented from developing, whether by others or whether by our own selves; then inevitably we suffer, because we are going against the law of our own being, which is to develop, to grow, like other living things. And this is the sort of situation in which many of us find ourselves. We want to grow; deep down we do want to grow, but we find it very, very difficult. We find all sorts of factors coming in the way, external and internal. We can't very often get on with the process of our development. We're not very satisfied with what progress we've made; at the same time we can't forget all about it and just go away, so we're caught in a sort of uncomfortable, doldrums-like state. We're unable to grow, but still we want to grow. We'd like to grow, but maybe we don't know how. And this, as I've said, is the situation of many of us. And this is the reason, presumably, even why we're here. We're not here, I take it, because we're satisfied with ourselves as we are or as we have been all these years. We're here, presumably, because we're **not** satisfied with ourselves as we at present are. We wouldn't like to remain indefinitely just as we are, How terrible it would be, in fact, if next year, in a year's time, we were just the same people that we are today; and in five years' time, the same people; ten years' time, or when we came to die, that we were the same people simply that we'd been all our lives no change, no improvement no growth, no development - well, how terrible that would be! So none of us likes to think this. None of us, surely, likes to think that even in a year's time - or maybe even next week, if we are sufficiently idealistic - we'll be exactly where we are just at this moment, Just as we are tonight.

So we **want** to grow, we want to develop, we'd like to grow, we'd like to develop, but we don't always know how; that doesn't seem so clear. We're dissatisfied with ourselves as we are; we'd like to be something more, something greater, something nobler, something more highly developed in a word, more highly evolved - but we don't know quite how to go about it. So what do we need? We need a method. We need a method of development, and this is the first of the things that Buddhism, that the Buddha, offers, and the first of the things that the FWBO offers to those with whom it comes into contact, who come into contact with it - a method of personal development.

So what is this method? What is this method of personal development? In a word, the method is meditation. But a second question arises; why meditation? How does meditation come to be a method of personal development? We've seen that human development is essentially a change in consciousness; a change in the level of consciousness; a change from a lower level to a higher level of consciousness, and meditation, of course, helps us to achieve just this, helps us to make that transition from the lower to the higher level of consciousness, and for this reason we use the word 'meditation' in a sort of double sense. Meditation signifies, in the first place, the higher state of consciousness attained, and secondly it signifies the method or methods that lead to the attainment of that higher state or higher level of consciousness. Not that meditation is the only method. There are other methods of development. There is ethical observance, there is ethical life. There are symbolical rituals such as one finds in the Tantra. There are devotional practices of various kinds. There's social service. One could even include the practice of the Arts and crafts. All these act upon the mind; all of these affect the level of consciousness; but they act on it only indirectly, through the physical body, through the senses; whereas meditation acts on consciousness directly, and it's for this reason that we regard meditation as the primary method of personal development.

Now we speak of lower and higher states of consciousness, but how, in fact, are we to tell the one from the other? How do we know which is higher, which is lower? In what way does the meditative consciousness differ from ordinary consciousness? Well, it differs in quite a number of ways. To begin with, the meditative consciousness is less dependent on the physical senses. Much of the time, ordinary

human consciousness is a sense-oriented consciousness. Sense impressions are coming in all the time. Even as we sit here sense impressions are coming in, impressions through the eye, through the ear, through the sense of touch, through smell, even through taste. Sense impressions are coming in all the time and they give rise to various sensations, various feelings, and consciousness - the mind - comes to be preoccupied with these - if you like, coloured by these - and usually we don't realise the extent to which our minds are preoccupied with thoughts, with impressions, with sensations, that have their origin in the world of the senses; which come in through the five physical senses. In the meditative consciousness, however, all this does not happen. Sense impressions are present but the mind does not react. Sense impressions recede, as it were, to the periphery of consciousness, and in deep meditation they may disappear altogether. In deep meditation, the consciousness is absorbed in the object of concentration, it's absorbed in the actual experience of the higher state, and sense-consciousness - awareness of the world of sense objects - fades away, as it were, into the remote distance and is either perceived very, very dimly and very, very faintly indeed, or, in very deep states of meditation, not perceived at all.

And this brings us to the second way in which the higher consciousness differs from the lower. It's simply more concentrated. When I say more concentrated, I'm not thinking of any such thing as a forcible fixation of attention, I'm thinking more in terms of a natural flowing together of all one's energies. Usually, one's energies are divided; they're in conflict; and sometimes some of our energies, even a large part of our energies, are not available to us at all. And this is why very often we can't do very much; we don't have, as we say, much energy; it's blocked, it's suppressed or repressed. But in meditation, especially when we've been practising meditation and had some degree of success with it, in meditation what happens is, quite naturally, quite spontaneously, that these energies, these blocked or suppressed or repressed energies, gradually become liberated and they're all, as it were, gently led, gently guided, in the same direction. So that the higher state of consciousness is thus a more integrated state, a more integrated experience. In it there's no conflict, there's no division, and consequently we experience a tremendous access of energy. Energy, as it were, bubbles up within us, Not just physical energy, though physical vitality may be enhanced incidentally - it's more of the nature of psychic energy, even emotional energy liberated in the course of the practice of the meditation. And this experience - this experience of energy being liberated - is, of course, intensely pleasurable, and the higher state of consciousness is therefore a state of happiness, of delight, of joy, rapture, even bliss. In other words, it's a state of intense emotional positivity; such as we hardly, if ever, experience at other times.

Now we notice here a rather strange, a rather interesting, fact, which is that when we are happy; when we're **really** happy; we tend not to think, At least, not to think unnecessarily. We may say that a great deal of our thinking is unnecessary. In other words, a great deal of our thinking is based simply on anxiety, and in the higher, meditative, consciousness there is no thought. So long as we are thinking we are not meditating; at least, we're not meditating very seriously. When I say that in the higher meditative consciousness there is no thought, because it is such a happy, such a blissful state, I don't mean, of course, that there's no consciousness, no awareness; in fact, in the absence of thought, in the absence of thinking, in the absence of discursive thought, consciousness, awareness, is clearer and brighter and more powerful than ever.

So these are just **some** of the ways in which the meditative consciousness, the consciousness that we experience in meditation - the level of consciousness that we experience in meditation - differs from ordinary human consciousness, it's less dependent on the physical senses; it's more concentrated; more integrated; it's more alive; it's more blissful; and it's free from discursive thought. Now for this kind of state; for this state of higher meditative consciousness; there is a term which is very widely used in Buddhism - it's the term 'Dhyana' - this is the Dhyana state. Dhyana being the Sanskrit term; jhana is the Pali equivalent. Sometimes Dhyana is rendered as superconscious state; in other words, state of intensified consciousness or intensified awareness, as well, of course, of intensified concentration, energy and joy.

Now, there isn't just one Dhyana, just one superconscious state, accessible to man; there's a whole series of such states, and Buddhist tradition often speaks in terms of the Four Dhyanas or four successively higher states; or if you like, stages or levels of superconsciousness, and these are described, in the Buddhist tradition, in two different ways. They are described psychologically - that is to say, in terms of constituent mental or psychical factors; this is the first way in which they are described. For instance, it is said that in the first Dhyana there is a subtle mental activity, there is concentration, there is happiness and there is Joy. This is what one experiences in the First Dhyana, the first of the meditative states, the first of the superconscious states.

The Second represents a sort of simplification. Discursive thought dies away and there is left simply concentration, happiness and joy. By the time you reach the Third there's a further simplification - simply concentration and happiness. And then in the Fourth, happiness, which is a comparatively gross experience, gives way to equanimity, so that one has, in the Fourth Dhyana, simply concentration and equanimity. Now this sort of description - this psychological description, as it were, is all right as far as it goes. It gives us quite a good idea of what the Four Dhyanas are like, what it is like or would be like to experience the Four Dhyanas; but it doesn't perhaps give us very much feeling for them, so in Buddhist tradition we find there's another way of describing the Four Dhyanas; it's a metaphorical way, by way of four comparisons. The First Dhyana is said to be - or rather, one's experience in the First Dhyana is said to be - like mixing soap powder with water. You might think this a rather modern comparison, but actually it's a very ancient one, going back to the Buddha himself. It's as though you took a handful of dry soap powder, and some water and you mixed the two together; you blended them; so that every single speck of soap powder was saturated with water and also there was no drop of water left over, so that you had a ball, as it were, of soap powder fully, completely, saturated with water and no water remaining over. The First Dhyana is like that. It's a state of, as it were, wholeness; a state of overcoming of conflict; a state of bringing things together - almost of integration. So the First Dhyana is rather like that; all schism healed.

The Second Dhyana, or one's experience in the Second Dhyana, is said to be like that of a lake which is fed by a subterranean spring. There's always this fresh, clear, cool water bubbling up from deep down into the lake. The experience, or one's experience in the Second Dhyana, is like that.

And then the Third Dhyana. There one feels rather like lotuses that grow in the water and are completely bathed by the water, permeated by the water. That's how one feels in the Third Dhyana.

And in the Fourth one feels, it is said, just like a man who has taken a bath on a very hot day - taken a bath, of course, in the open air, this being ancient India - and comes out of the bath, comes out of the water, wraps himself in a pure white sheet and just sits there. That's how you feel when you emerge from, or when you actually experience even, the Fourth Dhyana.

So these are the four traditional comparisons to try to give one some feeling of what those Dhyana states, those states of higher meditative consciousness, are really like. But even these may not be quite enough, may not be adequate, so there's another way of describing them which is not traditional, which is based, one may say, on personal experience and reflection, and which seeks to give an idea of what the Dhyana states are like as well as some feeling for them, and, at the same time, in plain English. So in plain English we may say that these four states or stages, these Four Dhyanas, are the states or stages of, first of all, **Integration**, then **Inspiration**, then **Permeation**, and **Radiation**. So what does one mean by these? Let's take a closer look at them and we'll then pass on to specific methods of meditation

So [the] stage of **Integration**; integration means bringing things together; it means making them into a whole, and this does not mean holding them together, as it were, by force, by means of some external bond, it means holding them together, bringing them together, making them into a whole by, as it were, subordinating them to, bringing them into harmony with, a common principle, or even grouping them, arranging them, around a common centre of interest. In the present context, which is that of personal development, or meditation, the integration is primarily psychological and what is brought together, what is integrated, are the different aspects and functions of the mind itself, and when we actually meditate, when we try to concentrate, the common principle, the common focus of interest is what we call the subject of the meditation, or the particular mental or material object on which, as a preliminary practice, one focuses attention; and this may be a mantra; it may be one's own breath or it may be a disc of colour.

And this psychological integration, we may say, is two-fold; it's what we may describe as horizontal, and it's what we may describe as vertical. The first - the horizontal integration - represents a sort of bringing of things together; a bringing of one's mental states and functions together within consciousness. It's a bringing together of all one's conscious interests and energies, and this, of course, is comparatively easy to achieve. We can do it, at least for a short time. But the second - the so-called vertical integration - consists in the bringing together of consciousness and unconsciousness and their respective contents. In other words, consists in the bringing together of the interests and the energies of both the conscious and the unconscious minds - and this is very much more difficult because the two are very often pulling in opposite directions. But now they become gradually unified. They're given a common direction, they're given a common purpose - they're brought together - and energy therefore begins to flow from the unconscious into the conscious minds and concentration becomes easier. We find that we can sit longer

in meditation. We experience a sense of harmony and repose. We experience an absence of conflict. So this is the state or stage of integration.

And then comes the stage of **inspiration**. Inspiration is from a word meaning simply 'to breathe', so inspiration is what is 'breathed' into us, 'breathed' into us from outside our ordinary conscious everyday self. It's something that comes into us from the heights, or if you like, from the depths; it doesn't matter very much which idiom we use. It comes into us, as it were, from some other dimension, from some other level of consciousness, whether we choose to call it a higher one or whether we choose to call it a deeper one. Usually this inspiration - this 'something of other' that comes into us - is experienced, as it were impersonally, as a principle, as a force, as an energy, but it may sometimes be experienced as a person. The poets, for instance, especially the ancient poets, speak of being 'visited' - or sometimes they complain of not being visited - by what they call 'the Muse'; in other words the forces of poetic inspiration. In ancient times of course, the poet regularly invoked the Muse at the beginning of a poem. In other words, he put himself in touch with the forces, the spiritual energies, which the figure of the Muse represented or embodied. He made himself open to them, receptive to them, because, unless the Muse inspired him, he could do nothing. Unless the Muse inspired him, he wasn't even a poet, he was just an ordinary man. In later times of course, in later centuries, the invocation of the Muse became a lifeless literary convention, but originally, quite clearly, it was an overwhelming emotional and spiritual experience. In fact, we may say that whether we formally invoke the Muse or not, without inspiration in some form, no poetry, no art of any kind, is possible. Now there are other ways of experiencing the inspiring power as a person. The poets speak of 'being visited' by their Muses and the prophets speak of hearing the voice of God - or what they think is, or what they interpret as, the voice of God. This voice might come to them in a dream, or while they are wide awake. They hear the voice calling them, or they hear the voice telling them to do something or to say something, and sometimes it tells them to do, or to say, something that they don't understand. They don't understand the reason for it, the meaning of it, but they obey nonetheless - sometimes with a struggle. If they don't obey, they seem to experience great discomfort. In Buddhist literature, especially in the literature of the Mahayana, there are many references to what are called 'the Nagas'. The Nagas are also represented in art. They are often represented as serpent-like beings with human heads, or sometimes as human figures with serpentine hoods, and they live in the water, they live in the depths of the water, they live in the rivers and the oceans and the streams. And the nagas represent the forces of inspiration coming from the depths, welling up from the depths. And in the same way in Tantric Buddhist literature, there are references to the Dakinis. The word 'Dakini' comes from a word meaning 'space' or 'sky' and in Tibetan, at least, the term is sometimes translated as 'space-traveller' or 'sky-walker', and the Dakinis represent the active forces of higher inspiration freely moving about, as it were, in the vast expanse of reality. And in Buddhist art, in the temple paintings, in the thangkas, the Dakinis are represented in the form of beautiful young women flying through the air with rainbow scarves trailing out behind them. These are the Dakinis, the forces of these higher spiritual inspirations. When experienced as rising from the depths, the forces of inspiration seem to lift one up with them. When experienced as descending from the heights, they seem to bend down and catch one up to their own level; but in either case the experience is the same; one is lifted up to that higher level; one is borne on the crest of a wave, or one may say, carried on the back of a winged horse. One is taken over, as it were, by something more powerful than oneself. At the same time this something is still oneself. It's another aspect of oneself, another dimension, and whether or not in connection with this something is still oneself; it's another aspect of oneself, another dimension; and whether or not in connection with the formal practice of meditation - by which I mean sitting meditation - inspiration is a very important stage of personal development. It's an intensely pleasurable stage. Even one may say, an ecstatic stage, and in this stage of inspiration one feels full of energy, one does everything effortlessly, spontaneously. In fact, one does not feel as though one is doing anything at all; things just seem to happen. One does nothing - or rather one **feels** that one does nothing, - but everything is done - beautifully! *[Laughter]*

So these stages of integration and inspiration can be experienced fairly easily. Most people will experience them, will experience integration and inspiration, at least at times, after even a few months of regular meditation, especially if they go away on an organised group retreat. And this is why I've dwelt on them at some length - on these stages of integration and inspiration. The other stages, the remaining stages, are rather more difficult to achieve, rather more difficult to experience, so I'll describe them much more briefly.

All right. Next, thirdly, the stage of **Permeation**. The best way of describing this is by contrasting it with the previous stage. In the stage of inspiration there are two things; on the one hand there's the state of horizontal and vertical integration, which has been carried over from the previous stage, and on the other, there's the higher level of consciousness which, whether from below or whether from above, flows into

that lower level, and this flow it is which is experienced as inspiration. And as the flow continues, the higher consciousness, which the flow represents, gradually penetrates the lower consciousness, and in the end it permeates it completely. It assimilates all its energies. It's for this reason that we call this stage the stage of permeation. The, as it were, inspiration has completely taken over, completely soaked into, what was formerly the comparatively lower level of consciousness, and this is why we call this stage the stage of permeation. Not only that. The higher level of consciousness is not only experienced as permeating the lower, it's experienced as permeating the world out there as well. That higher stage, that higher level of consciousness is experienced not only within oneself, completely filling oneself, but also outside, completely filling the world. It - that higher state of consciousness - is in you, but also, you may say, you are in it. It is in you - you are in it. It's as though you are fully permeated by water, soaked in water - at the same time, you are swimming in water. Or it's like being a balloon filled with air; you are empty, you are hollow and you are filled with air, and at the same time you are floating **in** the air, surrounded by air. There is the same element, as it were, the same consciousness, the same state of higher consciousness, both inside you and outside you, and between the one and the other there is only a thin, transparent integument, and that is you. In other words, your particular 'I' sense.

All right. Fourthly and lastly, the stage of **Radiation**. There's a big difference between this and the three previous stages. The three previous stages are, as it were, self-contained. They represent the mind's own experience of itself. The mind is, in a way, turned in upon itself; it's concerned more with its own inner states, its own inner experience. But here, in this stage of radiation, the mind is directed outwards. The mind here is not affected by the world, not influenced by the world but it **influences** the world; even it **acts** upon the world. By 'the world' we mean the world of so-called 'public reality'; the world of external things, people and events. In this stage therefore - the stage of radiation - consciousness has reached a very high degree of intensity. It's, of course, very integrated, very positive, very powerful; it's surrounded, as it were, by a great aura, and this aura protects it from external influences. At the same time this aura acts as the medium for influencing the outside world. It's rather like a great electric bulb: the glass of the bulb protects the filament; at the same time the light is transmitted to the whole surrounding area. The bulb **radiates** light. Traditionally, this fourth stage is said to be the basis for the developing of the so-called 'psychic powers' or supernormal powers, and this fact gives us a clue to the nature of this stage. The word for psychic powers is *iddhi* or *riddhi* and it's an interesting word. It's a word that originally had a very wide general meaning. One spoke, for instance, of the *iddhi* or *riddhi* of the king, of the ruler. One didn't mean, of course, that the king had psychic powers or that the king had supernormal powers; one meant that the king possessed a certain potency - which is what the word literally means. After all, the king was the king, and in the old days the king possessed the power of life and death, so therefore the king wherever he appeared, wherever he was present, had a tremendous effect on his surroundings. Here was this man with the power of life and death over hundreds and thousands, literally in the palm of his hand, so wherever he appeared there was this tremendous effect of this one man on the surroundings. And it's just like that with the stage of radiation. One's state of consciousness is so powerful that even without being affected oneself, one can affect others. One can produce effects that may well seem miraculous; one can give strength to the weak; one can overcome hatred with love; and one can bring, as it were, the dead back to life - or, as Ashvajit mentioned in his words of introduction, one can wake up those who are asleep. But of course, as the proverb says - the Indian proverb says - 'You can wake up those who are sleeping but you can't wake up those who are only pretending to sleep!' *[Laughter]*

So much, then for the Four Dhyanas, the four successively higher levels of consciousness, So much for the stages of integration, inspiration, permeation and radiation. It's time now that we enquired, quite briefly, how to achieve them.

I've said that meditation is **the** method of personal development, but this is not enough! In a sense, there's no such thing as meditation! You can't just practise meditation; you can't just meditate! There's a number of specific methods, and practising meditation means, in effect, having recourse to one or another of these, or to several of these, methods. And Buddhism, we find, is very rich in methods of meditation. Some of those methods are common to all schools; others are the exclusive property, as it were, of certain traditions. Some methods are meant for people of a particular kind of temperament; others are meant for those wishing to develop particular qualities or particular aspects of themselves, or to overcome a particular weakness.

I will describe very briefly one particular method by way of illustration. It's a method with which some of you will undoubtedly be familiar but it may be completely new to others who haven't perhaps so far taken any practical interest in the subject of meditation. The method is what we call in Pali *Metta Bhavana*. 'Metta' means simply 'friendliness' but in a very positive, a very powerful sense such as the word



doesn't quite possess in English - Metta or friendliness. And 'bhavana' is 'making to be', 'bringing into existence', or in other words, 'development'. So we can translate this as 'the development of universal friendliness', and we may say that undoubtedly it's one of the most important and effective methods of personal development. It's meant especially for those wishing to attain the higher levels of consciousness through the overcoming of hatred and the developing of friendliness, and, like all the other methods of meditation, it reminds us of one supremely important fact, which is that we **can** change; that consciousness **can** be restructured, can be redeveloped; that hatred, in this particular instance **can** be changed into love. And this is indeed, we may say, one of the strong points of Buddhism. It doesn't merely exhort you to love your neighbour - it's very easy just to say that - but it shows you, further, exactly how this is to be done. Moral exhortations are not enough; we need practical help. If we get only the moral exhortations and no practical help, then we feel simply frustrated and resentful and we may even start wondering if such a thing as personal development is possible at all.

Usually, we practise the metta bhavana in five successive stages. We first of all develop friendliness towards our own self, because that's where it starts - if you are not happy with yourself, if you are not **at ease** with yourself, if you don't **like** yourself - and many people nowadays, unfortunately, don't like themselves - you can't like other people. Your so-called liking of other people mustn't be what Nietzsche called 'your bad love of yourself', by which he meant your disliking of yourself. So feel friendly towards your own self first. Be on good terms with yourself. If you want to use the word, even love yourself; that's where it all starts. Charity really does begin at home and home is right here, with you. So that's what we do first. We develop good will, friendliness towards our own self; and then we extend it outwards.

We extend it to a near and dear friend; someone whom we know quite well, someone with whom we are on very close personal terms, someone around our own age, someone of the same sex - because the feeling of friendliness or love is not an erotic feeling but something quite distinct from that - and someone who is still alive - if we think of someone who died recently then we may feel quite sad and find difficulty in developing the feeling of friendliness. So a near and dear friend.

Then, a neutral person. Someone we know quite well by sight, perhaps have met a number of times, but we've no particular feeling towards them; we neither like them nor dislike them. We try to extend the same feeling that we felt towards our own self, next to the near and dear friend, now to this neutral person.

And then: fourthly even to someone whom we actively dislike, or even hate. By the time we come to this fourth stage we shall usually find, with a little practice, we've got up such a momentum of good will, or friendliness, that we find it quite easy just to feel quite warm towards that person whom usually we don't get on well with at all. All our feeling of hatred and antagonism and enmity just dissolves and we just feel like letting bygones be bygones and making a completely fresh start with that person, so that very often next time we meet him or her we feel completely differently and we even behave differently and a new chapter in our relationship with them begins.

Then we go a little further, We think of all these four people simultaneously; self; friend; neutral; enemy; we develop the same love, the same good will, the same friendliness, towards all four, and then in ever widening circles - all the people in the building where we are sitting; all the people in the locality; all the people in the town, county, country, continent, then all the world. If we like, we can think of all our friends in different parts of the world one by one, as it were ticking them off our metta list, and we can even think of other living beings; we can think of animals, we can think of birds; we can think perhaps of all the worlds, we can think of all the universes - **some** of them must be inhabited, surely, so we are told. Buddhist tradition certainly tells us this, so we let our metta expand even to the furthest corners of the universe. And by the time we've gone through this practice - and it takes about fifty minutes once you get into it - then we certainly do feel very much expanded; we certainly do feel that good will, that friendliness has been developed in our own heart, and, at least for the time being, that hatred has abolished, that hatred has been transformed into love.

So this is just one very simple, very well known, very popular, example of a Buddhist meditation method which actually does work, and which thousands and even millions of people in the course of centuries have found, for themselves, does actually work, and which many, many people today, even, do find does actually work.

Now this metta bhavana, this development of universal friendliness, does not as a practice stand alone. It's one of a set of four practices known as the Four Limitless States - because you try to develop the appropriate emotion without any limit whatsoever. The other three practices are the development of

compassion; of sympathetic joy; and of equanimity. These are not separate from the metta; the metta is the basis of them all. When we come into contact with suffering - when our **friendliness** comes into contact with suffering - compassion arises. When our friendliness comes into contact with other people's happiness, then sympathetic joy develops. And when metta, friendliness, compassion, and sympathetic joy are developed equally towards all, then equanimity arises. And equanimity, of course, is not indifference; there's no equanimity without friendliness. We could also add reverence or devotion, and this is experienced when the metta, the friendliness is directed, as it were upwards, towards the ideal, the spiritual ideal. And these five, we may say - that is to say, friendliness, compassion, sympathetic joy, equanimity (or peace, if you like), and devotion - these five are the principal positive emotions, and their development is regarded as very important by Buddhism. They occupy, in fact, a central place in the spiritual life, and when fully developed they constitute what is technically known as 'Liberation of Heart' or 'The Liberation of the Heart', and we may say that, nowadays, three-quarters of the way through this twentieth century, the development of positive emotion is more important than ever before. Without positive emotion there is no spiritual life. Many people, unfortunately, in the West, don't realise this. They think that religion is a dull and a gloomy affair, and perhaps religion is, but Buddhism - but the Dharma - certainly isn't, and personal development certainly isn't. I'd even go so far as to say, especially on my basis of nine years' experience with the 'Friends' and with so many people who have come along to the Friends, the FWBO, in the course of the nine years, that without strong positive emotions, no spiritual progress is possible, I'd even put it as strongly as that. That without well-developed positive emotions, no spiritual progress is possible. So this means that many people's first duty to themselves and to others is simply to be happy; to develop friendliness, compassion, sympathetic joy, equanimity and reverence and devotion.

Formerly, I must say, when I arrived back in this country after twenty years in the East, I found that there was not much spiritual emotion in Buddhist circles in this country. I remember my first Wesak meeting - Wesak being the great Buddhist festival of the whole year - I remember my first Wesak meeting in London after my return from India. As I looked around the hall I couldn't help noticing, I couldn't help seeing and feeling, that everybody looked dull and sad, and in the course of my remarks, in the course of my short talk, I remarked upon the fact. I said that, 'We've gathered together here today to celebrate Wesak, to celebrate the Buddha's Enlightenment, but you don't seem very glad! It's as though you almost are sorry that the Buddha gained Enlightenment rather than rejoicing over the commemoration!' So some of them laughed - a little feebly. And that was my ... almost my first experience after coming back to this country, and I never forgot it. But certainly we may say that things are very much better now, or at least, considerably better.

Now I've said that meditation is **the** method of personal development. I've described the metta bhavana. I've insisted on the importance of positive spiritual emotion, and I've referred to the full development of positive spiritual emotion as Liberation of Heart, but this is not enough! Not even this! We can go further. In fact we **must** go further if we want to complete the process of personal development, because there are two **kinds** of meditation and I want to say a few words about this and then we must conclude.

There's what we call the development of calm. This is the first great division of meditation - the development of calm. It represents the calming down of all unskilful mental states; the development of skilful states to the highest possible degree; and it covers meditation as I've described it so far, and it represents of course, a very high attainment indeed. But it has definite limitations. It can be gained, yes, but also it can be lost - and regained - and again lost. For **permanent** attainment we have to have recourse to the second, as it were higher, kind of meditation, which is not development of calm but what we call development of Insight. Here, Insight means direct vision, direct experience of the true nature of existence. Here, one sees the world **as it is**; one sees also what is beyond the world, one sees that also as it is. One sees that the world, the conditioned, the phenomenal, is unsatisfactory, impermanent, unreal, unbeautiful, and one sees that what is beyond the world, the Unconditioned, is blissful, permanent, real, beautiful, and so seeing one turns finally away from the world, away from the conditioned, one turns permanently in the direction of the Unconditioned. One turns, in a word, right round. This is the famous 'turning about in the deepest seat of consciousness'; one turns right round. And in this way, Insight goes beyond calm, though at the same time Insight is not independent of calm. Insight is developed on the basis of calm, which means that it has behind it the purified and the refined energies of one's whole being. And because it has behind it that purified and refined energy of the whole being, it can penetrate into the depths of existence. Insight, therefore, is not just a matter of intellectual understanding, though the content of Insight can be expressed in intellectual terms, at least up to a point. Insight is a matter of direct spiritual vision, of direct experience of ultimate reality, and when insight is fully developed, one achieves what is called 'Liberation by Wisdom'. And 'Liberation of Heart' and 'Liberation by Wisdom' together constitute what is known as 'Perfect Enlightenment'.

So calm and insight are both necessary. The purified heart must be united with the illumined mind. Love and compassion must be united with wisdom. And when one succeeds in doing that, one's personal development will be complete, so that having reached this point, we've made, in imagination at least, full use of the first of the four things that the FWBO has to offer. That is to say - a method of personal development. And having made full use of that method, we shall begin to see the world, see human existence, in a very different way from the way in which we saw it before; we shall begin to see the world, begin to see human existence, as a Buddha, as an Enlightened being, sees it. And how a Buddha sees it we shall try to understand in our next lecture.

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