Tape 185 - The Transcendental Eightfold Path

This morning I spoke about Buddhism, one of the three great themes of this Conference. But in reality there is no such thing as Buddhism - no such thing as Buddhism. Buddhism is an abstraction - it's just a word - there's nothing really corresponding to it. In reality there are only Buddhists: you and me. So this afternoon I am going to speak just about Buddhists and I'm going to speak about them, speak about us, in very practical terms. This morning we had quite a good dose of theory and that was necessary, its necessary for us as Buddhists to be concerned with theory - theory is, in fact, indispensable. Theory represents the philosophical underpinning of the practical - it represents the principle that makes the practice possible. But this afternoon we can leave it all to one side - we can take it as read. This afternoon I'm going to speak not about Buddhism but about Buddhists. So you can all sit back after your lunch and your rest and have a comparatively - a comparatively - easy time, while I speak about Buddhists. But what is a Buddhist? What is is that makes one - what is it that makes us - a Buddhist?

Well, the answer is really very simple indeed: a Buddhist is one who Goes for Refuge to the Three Jewels, a Buddhist is one who Goes for Refuge to the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Sangha. A Buddhist is one who goes for Refuge to the Buddha as Buddha - as Enlightened One. He or she has faith that the Buddha is the Enlightened One, not something else. I've mentioned, I think, that I spent some twenty years in India and Ven. Gunaratna has also spent some time in India and if one, of course, is in India one meets with Hindus - one meets with pious, religious-minded Hindus. And if one meets with pious, religious-minded Hindus and if one mentions the Buddha, if one mentions the name of the Buddha, they say, 'Oh yes, we know all about him. He is the nuba avatara.' * - that is to say, the ninth incarnation of the Hindu god Vishnu. And of course if one is a Buddhist one has to disagree with that - that the Buddha is not the nuba avatara *, not the ninth incarnation of the god Vishnu as related in the Hindu Puranas - * because according to the Hindu Puranas * the Buddha was what they call the amitya avatara * , a false avatara who came to teach Buddhism and to teach especially the doctrine of non-violence so that people should stop making sacrifices, especially animal sacrifices, and stop pleasing the gods, the Vedic gods, and therefore not go to heaven. So this was the story about the Buddha which was put about in the Hindu Puranas * - that he was the mithya avatara * . So one had to disagree with this and say, 'Well, no. The Buddha is not an avatara, not a descent, not an incarnation. He's a human being, a human being who by his own efforts gained Enlightenment, supreme Enlightenment.' This was my experience in India; I very often had to disagree with my Hindu friends. Some of them were very good friends, but I still had to disagree with them.

And similarly the Buddha was not just a wise man, someone like say Socrates. So we don't Go for Refuge to the Buddha if we consider him just a wise man. We don't Go for Refuge to the Buddha if we consider him just as an ethical teacher, someone like Ethictitus. * If we have that sort of idea about the Buddha - if we have any idea about him other than that he is the Enlightened One - there's no Refuge, there's no Going for Refuge. Going for Refuge to the Buddha means Going for Refuge to him as the Enlightened One. Similarly, theTAPE5
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arma just as a subject of eclectic interest or the subject of merely academic interest. One can know quite a lot about the Dharma, especially in its historical manifestations, without Going for Refuge, without being actually a Buddhist. I won't say that academic knowledge about Buddhism is useless. It certainly has its own definite, limited value, but Going for Refuge to the Dharma is quite another matter.

Going for Refuge to the Sangha means Going for Refuge to the Sangha as to those who have personally realized the higher stages of the Transcendental Path, whether they have realized it in the past, realize it in the present, or will realize it in the future. It is to that Sangha that one Goes for Refuge. Sometimes it's said that one Goes for Refuge to the bhikkhu Sangha, to the order of monks, but this is not at all correct. The Sangha to which one Goes for Refuge consists of both monks and lay-people, indeed, on this level the significance of monk and lay hasn't really very much bearing.

So these, very briefly, are the Three Jewels and it's Going for Refuge to these Three Jewels that

makes one a Buddhist. But there's something else also that makes one a Buddhist, and that is the observance of ethical precepts. These precepts are an expression of one's Going for Refuge. If one does not observe them - or, at least, is not making a serious effort to observe them - it means that one is not really Going for Refuge. So let me say just a few words about the four basic precepts, ethical precepts. But before I do that I want to make just a point with regard to the Refuges.

You may have notice that I speak of Going for Refuge, I don't speak of Taking Refuge or Taking the Refuges. Many Western Buddhists, however, do this: they talk of Taking Refuge with Bhikkhu So-and-so or Taking the Refuges with Lama So-and-so, but the original Pali and Sanskrit expression is definitely 'I go' - gacchami - 'I go'. It isn't 'I take' - 'I go', gacchami. And this difference is, I think, quite important. Going for Refuge is an action, it's something that one does. It's an action away from oneself, even an action out of oneself. It's a movement towards something, a movement towards someone, infinitely greater than oneself. One can even speak of this Going for Refuge as a surrender of oneself. But Taking Refuge or Taking the Refuges has a rather different sort of connotation. It suggests appropriation; it suggests trying to make the Three Jewels yours in an egoistic sense, rather than trying to make yourself theirs. It suggests almost trying to grab the Three Jewels. And this brings us to a very important general point - and perhaps here, just for the sake of a little change, I can be a bit autobiographical.

I personally came in contact with Buddhism more than fifty years ago and that was in London - London, England perhaps I should say. At that time there was only one Buddhist group in London -and very likely in the whole of Great Britain - and it had perhaps a dozen active members, just a dozen. I can remember us meeting during the war. We met in a little room in Central London not very far from the British Museum and I can remember that on one occasion we were sitting there, meditating - well, at least we were just sitting there with our eyes closed and trying to experience some inner peace - we were sitting there meditating and suddenly there was a terrific noise and the windows rattled - of course, a bomb had fallen. It was wartime. But I am very glad to say that nobody moved - nobody moved. You know, whether this was Buddhist equanimity or British phlegm I'm not so sure, but nobody moved. Perhaps we were all waiting for somebody else to move first but we sat there and we finished our meditation. So that was Buddhism in Britain fifty years ago.

Well, now there's at least a couple of dozen flourishing Buddhist groups just in London, including four or five FWBO groups, and there are hundreds of Buddhist groups in Britain, throughout the country. And of course, as you all know very well, there's the Zen here in America. Here there are probably several thousand Buddhist groups, large and small, representing nearly all the eastern Buddhist traditions. We have, as you know, Tibetan Buddhism: we've got the Nyingmapas, the Kargyupas, and the Gelugpas, and all their various sub-divisions. I think there are about fourteen to sixteen sub-divisions of the Kagyupas alone. And then we've got the Theravada: we've got Sri Lankan Theravada, Burmese Theravada, Thai Theravada, Cambodian Theravada, and of course all the various forms of Vipassana: the very, very strict and the relatively liberal and so on and so forth. And we've got Ch'an or Zen in various forms: Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Vietnamese. We've got also Pure Land Buddhism; we've got Chijon *; we've got Nichiren - all with many different sub-divisions.

And these have all come to the West, at least as addressed to Westerners, within the last twenty or thirty years. I'm not referring here, of course, to the so-called ethnic Buddhist communities. These have all come to the West within the last twenty or thirty years. And this is really a tremendous, a radical, cultural development. Between them, all these different groups and Buddhist traditions represent a vast expansion of our spiritual horizons. Before, our knowledge of religion was limited to Christianity and perhaps we'd just about heard of Islam, perhaps if we'd read about the Crusades, huh? But now, well, not to speak just of Buddhism, we know, at least we've heard, of so many different religions of the world and this, within the field of Buddhism itself alone, there's been this vast expansion of our spiritual horizon.

Again - reminiscing a bit - when I was a teenager in London, you never heard about yoga, you never heard about meditation but nowadays in Britain I think almost every person has heard

about yoga, almost every person has heard about meditation so that, even if in a very ordinary British family, your son or your daughter tells you, 'Well, I'm going along to a Buddhist group and I'm meditating.' no-one is the least surprised, it's not unusual - same with vegetarianism. There have been these great changes. So, we're presented nowadays, spiritually speaking, with marvellous opportunities, opportunities for understanding and practising so many different forms of Buddhism. But - but - there's also a danger. And the danger is what may be called 'spiritual consumerism' or perhaps I should say 'pseudo-spiritual consumerism'.

Nowadays we're consumers almost by definition - 'I consume, therefore I am' or 'I shop, therefore I am' - that just about sums up our philosophy. And of course there's a danger that we bring this attitude with us - this consumerist attitude - when we approach Buddhism itself, especially when Buddhism is presented to us in so many tempting varieties, so wonderful, so mysterious, so exotic, so fascinating. We can't sort of wait to just get our little sticky paws on them. We can in fact speak almost of a sort of smorgasbord * of spiritual goodies, just waiting there to be devoured. And so we sort of pick and choose, as the fancy takes us, and we become, not Buddhists, not people who Go for Refuge - we become just consumers of Buddhism.

So, to be a Buddhist consumer, or rather, a consumer of Buddhism, is the very antithesis of transformation - which is, of course, another of the great themes with which we're concerned in this Conference. In consumerism we assimilate Buddhism to ourselves, we assimilate it at least in its externals, assimilate it to our own greed, our own hatred, our own delusion but in transformation we assimilate ourselves to Buddhism. One of the most prominent features of our consumer society is advertising - the more advertising, the more consumption; the more consumption, the more ... The more advertising, the more consumption, and the more consumption, the more advertising, because out of your profits you of course invest a certain amount in further advertising and it becomes a vicious circle. And nowadays of course Buddhism itself comes to be advertised.

Up to a point, this is not a bad thing. We can certainly advertise such things as meditation cushions and incense. We can even advertise courses and classes in Buddhism. But there are some things which simply cannot be advertised. We cannot advertise Enlightenment and we cannot advertise such things as Tantric initiation - yet this is what is happening. More than thirty years ago I myself received a number of Tantric initiations. I received them in Kalimpong and Darjeeling, in the Eastern Himalayas.

I lived in Kalimpong, by the way, for some fourteen years. For fourteen years that was my headquarters and I was very fortunately situated. I arrived there in 1950 and I left in 1964 so I was there when refugee Tibetan Lamas started pouring out of Tibet, especially after 1959 when His Holiness also left Tibet and took refuge in India. So I was ideally situated, as it were, to intercept some of the greatest and most famous and eminent of these refugee Tibetan Lamas, Nyingmapa, Gelugpa, Shakyapa and Kagyupa. And I was so fortunate as to be able to receive teachings and initiations from a number of them. They're nearly all dead now, I'm sorry to say. Only one of them - that is Chetul Sangye Dorje - is still alive.

And I mention this because, at that time, when I received those Tantric initiations I was told Tantric initiation is a very secret thing, Tantric initiation is a very sacred thing - it's not to be talked about. In fact, one of my Tibetan Lama teachers told me that I was permitted to speak about a particular initiation I had received only with one other person whom he named. That was how secret it was in those days. But nowadays, in the West, Tantric initiation is actually being advertised. Even Anuttara Yoga Tantra - the highest yoga tantra - is being advertised. One enrols for a weekend course, one pays one's fee, and one gets initiated, perhaps along with several hundred other people, and one doesn't have to prepare oneself, one doesn't even have to be a Buddhist. And this is certainly not in accordance with the Buddhist Vajrayana tradition.

I remember one of my teachers telling me that if one wanted to practise Anuttara Yoga Tantra one first of all had to practise the Hinayana - he used the term 'Hinayana', nowadays we usually say 'Theravada' - for twelve years; one then practised the Mahayana for six years; then one practised the Outer Tantra for six years; and only then would one be considered ready to receive

Anuttara Yoga Tantra initiation. But nowadays it seems one can do it all in the course of a weekend. Of course, some teachers will justify this - they will say that they are planting seeds, seeds which will mature in the future - but I must say that I personally reject this explanation as a shameful rationalization. If one really wants to plant seeds one should teach Buddhist ethics.

And that brings me back to the Precepts, back to the four basic precepts, about which I promised to say a few words. But first let me clear up a possible misunderstanding. I've said we should not become consumers of Buddhism, should not pick and choose from the spiritual smorgasbord, * but of course we may have to study several forms of Buddhism before we find one to which we can wholeheartedly commit ourselves. But we should study them seriously and once we've committed ourselves to a certain form of Buddhism, a certain tradition, we should stick to it at least, I would say, for ten to fifteen years. At the same time we should maintain a friendly attitude towards other forms of Buddhism and the followers of other forms of Buddhism, and try to see, try to understand, what it is that we have in common with them because, after all, we are all Buddhists. We all Go for Refuge, regardless of the particular tradition within which we Go for Refuge - though it must be admitted that some traditions place more emphasis on the Going for Refuge and others less.

Now for the four basic ethical principles. As I've said, they are the expression of one's Going for Refuge. Not only that. They are not just an expression of it, they also support it, because one cannot really and truly Go for Refuge while one is leading a thoroughly unethical life. The four basic ethical precepts are not rules in the narrow, literalistic sense. They're much more like principles of ethical behaviour and we can speak of them as, let's say, the principle of non-violence, the principle of non-appropriation, the principle of chastity, and the principle of truthfulness. So let me say a few words about each of these. There's quite a lot that could be said - one could give a complete lecture on each of these principles - but obviously time is limited and I do want to leave a certain amount of time this afternoon for questions and, perhaps, answers.

So, first of all, the principle of non-violence: this means that we should refrain from harming or hurting others and, in particular, that we should refrain from killing or injuring them. Violence means, fundamentally, the assertion of one's own ego at the expense of another. In its extremest form it means the physical elimination of another in one's own personal interest. Violence thus represents a denial, a negation, of the fundamental human solidarity. It represents a radical assertion of separative selfhood. It also represents an inability to identify imaginatively with another person.

This puts me in mind of a little incident which featured in the news in Britain, unfortunately, a few months ago. Two little boys - aged, I think, ten and eleven - killed another little boy aged five or six and these two little boys who committed the murder were found guilty of murder and they were sentenced. And the question was raised whether these little boys who committed the murder knew the difference between right and wrong, because if they did not - or if it could be proved that they did not - understand the difference between right and wrong they could not be convicted of murder. And apparently they had been interviewed by a psychiatrist and she discovered that they knew the difference between right and wrong, even though they'd committed the murder. So she went, afterwards, a little into the question why, when they knew the difference between right and wrong, they had committed the murder and she said it was due to a lack of empathy with their victim. If you empathize with other people you can't harm them, you can't hurt them, you can't commit violence against them.

So violence represents an inability to identify imaginatively with another person, inability to put yourself in the position of the other person, an inability to empathize with the person, to feel with that person, to feel that person's feeling as your own. To the violent person, another person is simply an object, a thing. Violence is thus the negation of ethical and spiritual life and non-violence in some ways represents the fundamental principle of Buddhism. There is one text, actually, which does say this - that non-violence is the supreme dharma - and that is the Mahavastu, which is a text of the Lokuttaravadins. If you sincerely try to practise non-violence you'll find, in the long-run, that you're practising every other Buddhist virtue - in principle, they're all contained in non-violence.

Secondly, there is the principle of non-appropriation. Violence is based on a strong sense of 'I' and appropriation is based on a strong sense of 'mine' - the two go together. Of course - we may say, we may argue - not all appropriation is wrong. We may take what we really need but we must not take what belongs to others, either by force or by fraud - in other words, we must not steal.

And then, thirdly, the principle of chastity: this relates obviously to our sexual behaviour and it means in the first place that we should not exploit others sexually, should not obtain sexual satisfaction for ourselves by means of force, or fraud, or misrepresentation. Sex, as everybody knows, is a very powerful urge indeed and so long as we allow ourselves to be dominated by it very little, if any, spiritual progress is possible and serious practising Buddhists will therefore relegate sexual activity to the periphery of their lives rather than allowing it to occupy a central place, a central position, and their aim will be eventually to achieve complete chastity of body, speech, and mind, even though perhaps that may be possible at the end or towards the end, rather than at the beginning, of their lives.

And fourthly, the principle of truthfulness. Truthfulness means speaking in accordance with fact - a liar, a deliberate liar, is to that extent a schizophrenic - he or she does or thinks one thing and says another. Untruthfulness is also destructive of human communication; it's destructive of social life. Incidentally, it does occur to me that one of the Buddha's titles was 'Tathagatha' - Tathagatha. In the Pali scriptures the Buddha is often represented as referring to himself not as 'the Buddha' but as 'the Tathagatha' and there are various explanations of the meaning of this word 'Tathagatha' and one explanation is that a Tathagatha, a Buddha, is one who acts as he speaks and speaks as he acts. So this is quite an achievement. This achievement constitutes almost a definition of Enlightenment itself - that we speak as we act and we act as we speak; that the two are in harmony, in correspondence. And this is really so rare.

But anyway, as I said also, untruthfulness is destructive of social life. Without truthfulness there can be no such thing as commerce, no such thing as the administration of justice, and no such thing as politics in the true sense of the term - you can draw your own conclusions from that. I find it very interesting that in the Pali scriptures when the Buddha comes to speak about speaking the truth he gives a certain illustration - he says, 'Herein, a certain person is summoned to the court and the judge asks him or says to him 'Good fellow, did you see this?' and the witness has to say 'Well, yes' if he did see it. And if he didn't see it he should say, 'Well, no, I didn't see it'. And this is the example that the Buddha gives of truthfulness - truthfulness within the judicial content (sic - context?) -because if a witness speaks a lie, if a witness bears false witness even after taking an oath, justice cannot be administered, and if justice cannot be administered the whole social fabric collapses.

I remember another little story, an experience of mine when I was staying in South India and I had a couple of friends who were lawyers, and one day we were passing together the courtroom - in South India this is called the kaitcheri (*?) - and outside the door I saw, oh, about a dozen or fifteen men, just standing there, waiting, just hanging around, and I asked my friend, 'What are those men doing?' He said, 'Oh, they're just professional false witnesses. They are waiting to be hired.' So I said, 'Well, doesn't that pervert the course of justice?' He said' 'No.' He said, 'There's an informal agreement among we lawyers that there are never more than twelve false witnesses on any one side.' So ... Well, it makes one think.

So the Buddha gave the speaking of truth in a judicial situation, in the courtroom, as an example - almost a paradigmatic example - of speaking the truth, because unless one speaks the truth there's really no social, human life. Moreover, untruthfulness almost always is based on negative mental states. Why do we tell lies or why do we suppress the truth? Why do we exaggerate? Why do we minimize? Well, it is either out of greed - to get something we couldn't otherwise get; out of fear - fear of punishment; or just out of vanity. So we never 'speak ... 'speak the thing that is not', you may remember. If you've read 'Gulliver's Travels' you may remember that Gulliver visited the country of the Houyhnhnms (*?) - the Houyhnhnms * and the Yahoos, * of course. And the Houyhnhnms, * he discovered, didn't have a word for 'lie'. They were so virtuous, in their language, the Houyhnhnm * language, there was no word for 'lie'. And Gulliver had to take

great pains to explain what a lie was and he explained that in his country - well, England - there was such a thing as a lie. So the Houyhnhnms * coined a term in their own language: 'to speak the thing that is not'. So we 'speak the thing that is not' - we tell lies - whether out of greed, or fear, or vanity, and so on.

So these are the four basic ethical principles: non-violence, non-appropriation, chastity, and truthfulness. And they are principles, not rules - principles of ethical behaviour. And unless we are making a serious effort, at least, to observe these precepts we cannot really claim that we are Going for Refuge, cannot really claim to be Buddhists. But there is a fifth precept that I could mention - some of you may be wondering why I haven't mentioned it - and that is the precept of abstention from alcohol.

Well, I must confess, as perhaps you know, there is some difference of opinion among Buddhists, even in the East, regarding this precept and this is why I haven't included it among the basic precepts. Some Buddhists believe that a Buddhist should abstain from alcohol totally. Others believe that it is permissible for a Buddhist to take alcohol in moderation - that is to say, take it to the extent that it does not cloud our awareness. One might say that those Buddhists tend to follow a middle path: they take just a little.

Well, personally, I believe that it is better if we can abstain - if we're Buddhists, it's better if we can abstain - totally. Even if it doesn't do us any harm, what about the example that we set? And one has only to open the newspapers, at least in England, to see how much harm, how much damage, how much misery, how much loss of life, is caused by the abuse of alcohol. So I think that Buddhists, really, need to set an example here. And alcohol, I would suggest, should certainly not be available at Buddhist Centres or Buddhist functions.

I remember, some years ago, one of my disciples toured around some of the American Buddhist Centres. He was quite shocked to find that some Buddhist Centres actually had, in the Centre itself, their own bar - their own bar! - and that, whether before or after the meditation, well, you just went and had a drink, had a cocktail or whatever. And, well, he was really surprised and when he told me this, well, I was pretty surprised too. So I think that, at the very least, alcohol should not be available at Buddhist Centres or at Buddhist functions.

Well, so much for the four - or five - ethical precepts. Some of you, I suspect, may have been thinking I've spent rather too much time on them. You may have been thinking that, well, you know them pretty well already. But do we really know them? Do we practise them? Do we make, at least, a serious effort to practise them? It's very easy to be very fascinated by Buddhist art. It's easy to be drawn into highly intellectual discussions about Madhyamika and Yogacara philosophy, not to speak of the Abhidhamma - there are all sorts of beautiful, knotty problems to disentangle, fascinating intellectual conundrums. It's easy to be attracted by the mysteries of the Tantra. And it's easy to forget things like the basic ethical precepts. But we forget them at our peril. We need to emphasize them more and more. We need to emphasize the practice of them more and more, otherwise our lives will not be transformed and we will not have, in the West, a Buddhism worthy of the name. (End of side one of tape)

So much then for the basic ethical precepts. It's time that we returned to Going for Refuge: Going for Refuge, that is to say, to the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Sangha. As I've said, it is this - this Going for Refuge - together with the observance of the precepts that makes one a Buddhist. But there are Buddhists and Buddhists - in other words, there are different levels of Going for Refuge - and this is very important. So let us take a look at these different levels of Going for Refuge. Broadly speaking, they are four in number: there's real Going for Refuge; then there's effective Going for Refuge; then there's provisional Going for Refuge; and, finally, there's ethnic or cultural Going for Refuge.

So first of all let's take a look at the real Going for Refuge. Real Going for Refuge is the Going for Refuge of those who have attained or achieved at least a degree of penetrative insight or clear vision. It's the Going for Refuge of those who have become at least a 'stream-entrant'. It's the Going for Refuge of those who have begun to achieve 'knowledge and vision of things as they

really are'. There are a number of episodes in the Pali Buddhist scriptures which illustrate this particular level of Going for Refuge. The Buddha, as we know, wandered about a lot. He went on foot, from village to village, town to town, city to city, sometimes travelling through vast tracks of jungle. And he met, he came across, all sorts of conditions of people - maybe a wandering ascetic, maybe a learned brahmin, maybe a poor outcast, maybe a prince. He'd meet them; they'd get into conversation; he teaches - and he teaches, we're told, gradually. Yesterday we were told how he met a man wearing a bark garment.

Usually he started off talking about the benefits of generosity, then about ethics, then about meditation, and then - only then, when the ground was prepared - did he start speaking about his own specific teaching, which was that of conditionality, either in the form of the Four Noble Truths or in some other form. And the person - whether ascetic or brahmin or outcast or prince - listened, and sometimes it happened that he, or she, was absolutely overwhelmed. And they expressed their sensation, their experience, of being overwhelmed in what became a sort of stock phrase: they said that they felt as though they had 'seen the light'. They felt as though they had lived in darkness before but now they see the light; light has arisen, light is shining upon them. And then they say that they feel as though they have been relieved of a great burden, a great weight - nowadays perhaps we'd describe this as the burden or the weight of anxiety, the anxiety that seems to pervade modern life. And then, in Buddhist terminology, the person's Dharma-eye opens: he or she sees Reality, sees the truth of conditionality, sees conditioned co-production, sees that the whole of mundane existence is painful, at least potentially; transitory; and devoid of permanent unchanging selfhood. And, as a result, the person, the auditor, is transformed. So what does he or she do? He Goes for Refuge - he Goes for Refuge. From the depth of his heart he says 'Buddham saranam gacchami; Dharmam saranam gacchami; Sangham saranam gacchami.' and this is the real Going for Refuge, the Going for Refuge which is consequent upon the opening of the Dharma-eye and the becoming of a stream-entrant. This is sometimes called 'Transcendental Going for Refuge - Lokuttara Going for Refuge'. It's the Going for Refuge of stream-entrants and others on the higher, Transcendental Path - the higher, purely Transcendental Path of the Spiral about which I spoke this morning. And it's to this level of Going for Refuge that, as Buddhists, we should aspire.

And then, secondly, there's effective Going for Refuge and this is the next level down. This is the level of the serious, committed, practising Buddhist who has not yet achieved penetrative insight or clear vision - that is to say, not to the point of the opening of the Dharma-eye and the attainment of stream-entry. And even in the Buddha's day there were many, many of his disciples who achieved only this level. And this kind of Going for Refuge too is illustrated many times in the Pali scriptures. Again, someone hears the Buddha teach; they are greatly impressed; they accept the teaching, sincerely - but the Dharma-eye does not open. Reality is not actually seen. None the less, the person Goes for Refuge - says 'To the Buddha for Refuge I go; to the Dharma for Refuge I go; to the Sangha for Refuge I go.' And this is effective Going for Refuge. In effective Going for Refuge one has a theoretical understanding of the teaching; one observes the precepts; one practises meditation; and one does one's utmost to develop penetrative insight or clear vision. At the same time, one does one's best to organize one's life in such a way as to make such things - especially meditation and the development of clear vision or penetrative insight - possible. One orients the whole of one's existence, so far as one possibly can, towards the Three Jewels. One gives Buddhism absolute priority in one's life. One is then effectively Going for Refuge.

And then, thirdly, there's provisional Going for Refuge, and again we come down a level. This is the level of someone who is genuinely interested in Buddhism but only up to a point. They may or may not observe the precepts; they may meditate a little - sometimes; may even meditate quite a lot - sometimes; may read a lot of books on Buddhism; may even take a degree in Buddhist studies. But they'll not be making a serious effort to develop penetrative insight or clear vision and they'll certainly not be orienting their life towards the Three Jewels - on the contrary, they may be trying to fit Buddhism into a quite ordinary, probably quite affluent, probably middle-class, life-style, and this is provisional Going for Refuge.

Fourthly and lastly, coming down a step again, we've got ethnic or cultural Going for Refuge.

This is the Going for Refuge of those who are simply 'born Buddhists' as they sometimes call themselves. I've met lots of people in the East who are 'born Buddhists' and I've sometimes ... well, they've asked me how I became a Buddhist and I said 'Well, I became a Buddhist at such-and-such a place, at such-and-such time, when I was such-and-such an age.' And then they'd say 'Ah - me, I'm a born Buddhist.' But, in reality, one cannot be a born Buddhist. The Buddha maintained that one couldn't be a born brahmin and if we translate that into Buddhist terms, well, one can't be a born Buddhist. You're a Buddhist only to the extent that you actually practise Buddhism. On this level, the level of cultural or ethnic Going for Refuge, one may conform to Buddhist manners and customs but without any understanding of the Dharma. And one may take part in Buddhist festivals; one may even be very proud of being a Buddhist and might even look down on non-Buddhists or on those Buddhists who have merely been converted to Buddhism. So this is ethnic or cultural Going for Refuge. We could say it's not really a level of Going for Refuge at all - it's such only, so to speak, by courtesy. For someone on this level, of course - the level of ethnic or cultural Going for Refuge - there's always the possibility of rising to the higher levels of Going for Refuge because the Dharma is present, at least, in their environment.

So, these are the four levels of Going for Refuge and I've been speaking so far this afternoon not so much about Buddhism as about Buddhists. So let me recapitulate just a little bit. We've seen that a Buddhist is one who Goes for Refuge, Goes for Refuge to the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Sangha, and Goes for Refuge to them in their traditional sense. A Buddhist is also one who observes the four - or better still, the five - basic ethical precepts, observes them as an expression of that Going for Refuge and also as a support for it. We've seen that one cannot really be an unethical Buddhist, because there's no personal transformation without ethical life - in fact, there's no social life, even no human life, without ethics. And finally, we've seen that there are four levels of Going for Refuge: real, effective, provisional, and ethnic or cultural. So far, in the course of these two talks, we've learned something about Reality, something about Buddhism - that's what we learned this morning. And this afternoon we've learned something about the individual Buddhist, the person who Goes for Refuge, the person who is, or is to be, transformed. It remains for me to say something about the process of transformation and we'll then conclude and have, yes, a few questions and perhaps a few answers.ittle paddling, perhaps hoist a little sail to catch the breeze, and eventually we hope - not alone, but with others on that raft - cross to the other shore.