

ASPECTS OF THE HIGHER EVOLUTION OF THE INDIVIDUAL

Lecture 88: the Problem of Personal Relationships

Friends.

Case Number 1. James is 37 years old and it so happens that he's an only child, and his father has been dead for quite a number of years; in fact he hardly remembers him, and James is still living with his mother. He has a job, he works as a Book-keeper for a commercial firm. He has worked for the same firm for 10 or 12 years, promotion has been slow but steady, and he's pretty contented with his job. For quite a while, in fact for quite a number of years, he's been interested in Buddhism. Not only interested, he's made quite a close study of the different schools of Buddhist thought, and he has a quite considerable collection of books, not only on Buddhism, but on different Eastern philosophies and religions. Not only that, he's even written and published in Eastern Buddhist magazines one or two articles on Buddhism which have been quite well received.

James also cherishes two or three Buddhist, in fact Buddha, images that he has picked up at various antique shops, and he's rather proud of these. Unfortunately James's mother is not at all in favour of Buddhism. She wouldn't mind if James collected stamps, she wouldn't mind if he had any other similar innocent hobby, but Buddhism is going a bit too far, and she's rather opposed to Buddhism, and she does her best to discourage James's interest in it. Now James of course doesn't give up his Buddhist interests or activities altogether, but he very definitely has to keep them within certain limits. For instance his mother would be deeply shocked if she knew that he had on the premises such things as images of the Buddha, because these are obviously heathen idols. So the images have to be kept locked up in a cupboard in James's room, and mother doesn't know about them at all, she doesn't even know that they are there. And James takes them out and looks at them every night before going to bed, and then he puts them back in the cupboard and he locks the door.

Of course, I need hardly tell you that James cannot go to any of the retreats, either the Easter retreat or the Summer retreat. He gets just three weeks holiday a year, and of course he has to take mother away to the seaside for those weeks. I need hardly tell you that James is unmarried. But recently he's been feeling a bit restless. He feels he needs to expand but he doesn't want to hurt mother's feelings.

Case Number 2. Peter is 21. He's an art student and he lives with his girlfriend. He discovered Buddhism rather dramatically about a year ago, and since then he's become more and more deeply involved, in fact every month that goes by he feels his commitment more definite and more strong. He attends meditation classes, lectures, meditates himself at home when he can quite a bit, otherwise he's a quite ordinary normal sort of person; he doesn't seem to have any particular hang-ups, he's getting on quite well with his work at college - his tutors are quite pleased with him, he's very sociable, cheerful by disposition, and he has lots of friends. And since becoming involved with Buddhism, he feels that after having perhaps wasted in his earlier years quite a bit of time, he's really begun to develop. But unfortunately, there's a snag. It so happens that his girlfriend is not interested in Buddhism at all. In fact, since Peter started going out to meetings, Buddhist meetings twice a week, she's developed a sort of dislike for it. She refuses to accompany him to any of these meetings, and of course she doesn't like being left alone in their flat. She did go along just once to a meditation meeting, but she told Peter afterwards she didn't like the atmosphere, so she didn't go again. And unfortunately recently, there have been some rather painful scenes between Peter and his girlfriend, and one of them I'm sorry to have to report, ended with her throwing a milk bottle at him, and bursting into tears. And that evening Peter could not meditate! Still more recently, she's been insisting that they spend all their evenings together, and Peter doesn't know what to do. He's lived with this girl for two years, he's very fond of her; he's quite convinced that the relationship is good for the pair of them, and he certainly doesn't want to give it up. But at the same time he doesn't want to have to give up Buddhism either. Sometimes I'm afraid he thinks that he may even have to find another girlfriend, or even give up women altogether.

Case Number 3. Gwendoline is 27, and she's been married for 5 years. Two years ago her husband left her and went to live with another woman, and Gwendoline quite naturally, and understandably, was very deeply distressed. In fact she went through a very difficult period for several weeks, and had a nervous breakdown. And it was during this very difficult period that she came in contact with Buddhism. And with the help of Buddhism, with the help of meditation and discussion, contact with like-minded people she was able eventually, to begin to discover herself, and learn to stand on her own feet. Eventually she went to live as part of a Buddhist community up in Scotland and that was nearly a year ago, and she's now very happy there. But quite recently her husband has got in touch with her and says he wants to come back to her. Now Gwendoline is a rather big-hearted forgiving sort of girl, so she's quite ready to welcome him back and let bygones be bygones. But once again there's a difficulty. He wants her to leave that Buddhist community in Scotland. In fact he'd rather like her to give up her interest in Buddhism altogether. He can understand her developing that interest while he was away, when he left her in fact, but now that she has him again he says, Buddhism ought not to be any longer necessary. So he says, this

is his offer, his suggestion, that he'll make a very comfortable love-nest for the pair of them, and they will be happy together. Now Gwendoline thinks that this is all rather infantile, and she refuses to give up Buddhism, but he says that what she's really doing is using Buddhism to punish him for his unfaithfulness, that she hasn't really forgiven him.

Case Number 4. Earnest is 52, and he works in the City. He's deeply interested in Zen and he attends a Zen class once a week. But Earnest is also married and he's been married for 30 years, and I'm afraid he's popularly what is known as a "hen-pecked husband". And his wife who is a rather militant sort of character allows him out only one evening a week. Six evenings he has to spend at home whether he likes it or not. Now of course he'd like very much to attend lectures on Buddhism, and other Buddhist activities, but this is quite impossible because he's restricted to just one evening a week, and he has to choose. If he wants to go to the meditation, he can't go to the lecture. If he goes to the lecture he just can't go to the meditation and that's that. Now Earnest due to years and years, even decades of conditioning has got into such a state of mind that he wouldn't dream of questioning his wife's authority. He just accepts it. But sometimes, he has quite strange fantasies, and in one of these fantasies, his wife is run over by a bus while out shopping. He is grief-stricken at her loss, and to console himself he goes out to Buddhist meetings every evening of the week!

Case Number 5. David is 35, and Mary is 32. They've been very happily married for 10 years. They've got two children, they've got a boy aged 9, and a girl aged 7, and David is a Buddhist. Not only is he a Buddhist, he's quite deeply involved in various Buddhist activities. Mary it so happens is not a Buddhist, in fact she's not particularly interested in religion at all, but she sees quite clearly that to David Buddhism means quite a lot, so she quite genuinely sympathises with his interest. She even encourages it. But recently in this happy household too, a problem has arisen, and it's arisen in connection with the children. Now David has got no wish to indoctrinate the children, he doesn't want to bring them up as Buddhists just as some orthodox Christian parents bring up their children as Christians. But he'd very much like that the children should know about Buddhism. And he'd like for instance to bring them up as vegetarians, not bring them up in the habit of eating meat. And he'd like to send them to a progressive school where they'd be able to develop a much broader outlook than the ordinary conventional one. But Mary unfortunately thinks rather differently. She thinks it would be best - that it would be in the children's interests in fact - to bring them up just like everybody else, as conventionally as possible, so that they don't differ too much, in fact don't differ at all if possible, from other people of the same social class and the same educational background. And she'd like very much to send them, not to a progressive school, but to a very good school of the conventional type, where they would become imbued with conventional traditional values.

Now recently the children have become aware of the difference of opinion, including difference of opinion on this topic between their parents, and the situation is made a little bit more difficult by the fact that the boy in any case wants to grow up to be like his father, and he's always asking questions about Buddhism, and of course he always asks father the questions about Buddhism. And for instance he wants to know the meaning of certain things that daddy does. He wants to know well, what is daddy doing when he's sitting quietly in the bedroom with his legs crossed and his eyes closed - what is it all about? And daddy of course would like to tell him and even encourage him to sit like that, but mummy won't hear of it or at least she rather discourages it, she's a bit cold when it's mentioned. The little girl incidentally takes rather after her mother, she tends to be a bit prim and proper. Now David and Mary are very sensible people, and they're much too sensible to quarrel, but they realise they've got a problem.

Case Number 6. John is 19 and he lives in a small provincial town quite a long way from London. He's got long hair, he works in the local garage, and in his spare time he writes poetry. Now it so happened a few months ago that he discovered and became very interested in Tibetan Buddhism, mysticism in general, the I Ching, and so on. So being so interested in them, being in fact fascinated by them, being full of these new interests, these new ideas, he started quite innocently talking about them to his workmates at the garage and other friends with whom he went to the pub and so on but rather to his surprise, rather to his astonishment, he found they just weren't interested. The only response he got was a good-hearted laugh from them and they just didn't respond in any other way. In fact they didn't even seem to understand what he was talking about. Now in that particular provincial town where John lives, there's no Buddhist group. As far as he knows, there's no other Buddhist or anyone interested in those things at all. So the result has been that over the last few months, John has begun to feel more and more isolated, more and more cut off from people, more and more cut off from the people that he knows. It's as though a great gulf had opened between him and them, and was getting wider and wider and wider. And he stood on one side, they stood on the other, and even if he shouted it seemed that they could just not hear what he was trying to say. So he feels very very much on his own, very isolated, very alone, and this is made all the more difficult because John by nature is very friendly and very sociable, he'd like very much to have friends, not just ordinary social friends, but friends with whom he could share his thoughts, share his ideas, with whom he could discuss the books that he reads and so on. He'd very very much like

to have friends of this sort. In fact sometimes he feels so alone and so isolated that he's almost sorry that he made these discoveries, because they seem just to have cut him off from everybody. And he sometimes wonders whether he hadn't better just give up Buddhism, throw all those books away and just try to be like everybody else. But he's reached a point now where he finds that very difficult, he's so interested, and these new ideas mean so much to him that he couldn't give them up even if he tried, because in a sense they express, or they enable him to understand, a part of himself.

Now it so happened that John saw one day in the newspapers the name of a very famous English Buddhist, so he thought he'd write to him and get some advice. And sooner or later, a few weeks afterwards he received a reply. But all that the reply said to John was "Walk on" and John is still wondering what that means.

Case Number 7. Agatha is 42, and she's unmarried. For the last 20 years she's looked after her widowed mother who is a chronic invalid, has to have everything done for her. Agatha does have a number of brothers and sisters, and some of these brothers and sisters are married. Several of the married ones have in fact grown-up children. But throughout those 20 years, none of the brothers and none of the sisters, none of the nephews and none of the nieces ever tried, even offered to help Agatha look after her mother. They'd been quite content to leave it all to Agatha, and they of course said among themselves whenever it was discussed that she obviously enjoys doing it so why should we interfere. This is what they said. Now for many many years, Agatha has been deeply interested in Zen Buddhism, and she's read all the books on the subject that she could possibly get hold of. But she realises, in fact she's realised for quite a long time, books can't tell one very much, can't take one very far. So five years ago she took a rather bold step. Five years ago she wrote off to a Zen monastery in Japan asking to be accepted as a novice disciple when she could come, and months later she was provisionally accepted and since then, she's been scraping the pounds and the pence together and saving up her fare and so on, and she now has enough money for two whole years in Japan at that monastery. And recently she had to break the news to her brothers and sisters. And she had to tell them quite frankly, nicely but firmly, that they'd have to look after mother, take care of mother for a while. Now all the brothers and sisters backed up by the nephews and nieces thought that Agatha was being very unreasonable. They said that she knew perfectly well that none of them had time to look after mother. One of them who couldn't come to the family consultation wrote to her that he knew very little about Buddhism indeed, but he was quite sure it didn't teach selfishness. Agatha however, is determined to go, even if it means depositing mother on somebody's doorstep.

Case Number 8. Gerry is 22, is a writer, I forget what he writes, but anyway he's a writer and he works at home, and he shares a flat with a friend who is an actor, and both of them, Gerry and his actor friend are interested in Buddhism. And they're both quite seriously concerned with self-development, the higher evolution, and so on. Now Gerry, it so happens, like other young men nowadays, has got two girlfriends. And it so happens that he's equally fond of them both. If he was asked to choose between them, well he just couldn't say which one he preferred to keep, he was equally fond of the pair of them. Now until recently they didn't know of each other's existence. He used to see them separately. Now not so very long ago, Gerry's flatmate, the actor, decided that he'd go and live and work in New York, and it also so happens that Gerry doesn't want to give up the flat in which they've both been living because he's very happy and comfortable there, so he thought it would be rather a good idea if both the girlfriends came and lived with him, and all three of them could be happy together. And he thought that this would work out all the better in as much as both the girls are quite interested in Buddhism. One of them in fact meditates. However when he put it to them they both reacted rather negatively! To begin with, each was rather upset to put it mildly that he had a relationship at all with somebody else. Each was quite willing to move in with Gerry, but not if the other girl moved in too. Each made it clear that she wanted to have Gerry all to herself. Now Gerry, back in his flat and talking things over with his actor friend, said he was rather surprised by all the fuss. Now perhaps Gerry was being rather naïve, but he definitely feels that both girls are just being possessive. He's not sure what to do. He's not sure whether to choose between them, whether to give both of them up, or whether to invite another male friend to share the flat and try to return to the status quo ante(?) with the girls. And as he thinks it all over he reflects rather sadly how much easier personal relationships would be if only people were a bit more reasonable!

Case Number 9. Robert is 45, and he's married with 3 children, and the ages of the children range from 10 to 18. Robert works in a bank. He's worked there for years. As far as I remember he's Head Clerk I think they call it, and he's hoping one day to be Temporary Assistant Manager. He's been interested in Buddhism since he was quite a young man, and he participates regularly in all Buddhist activities; and in one way and another he puts in quite a lot of time meditating. His wife unfortunately has always been somewhat negatively disposed towards Buddhism, but she's never gone so far as to actually prevent Robert from participating in any of the activities that he wanted to participate in. But it must be admitted that at times in the home, especially when Robert went out for the third evening in succession to some

Buddhist meeting there was a bit of tension. His wife didn't actually say anything, at least not very directly, she'd say for instance "well, I suppose you're going out again tonight" or something like that and he'd say "yes, I won't be very late, I'll come as soon as I can," because fortunately, Robert happens to be a rather tactful diplomatic person, and he always conducted himself in this respect as considerably as he possibly could.

Now Robert, like most people who work in these regular jobs, he also gets only three weeks holiday every year, and so far he's always had to choose between going to the seaside for three weeks and attending the Buddhist Summer Retreat. So far, he's always gone to the seaside with the family, but this year he thought he'd have a change. This year he thought that he'd like to go to the Retreat, to the Summer Retreat, so he told his wife, he said "This year I'd like to go to the Summer Retreat. I'll spend two weeks there, and then I'll join you and the children at the seaside for the third week. You'll have three weeks, you and the children will have three weeks at the seaside on holiday as usual." And he pointed out to his wife in a very reasonable sort of way that the children after all were no longer very young, and they could all manage, wife and children, without him quite well for a couple of weeks. Now his wife just would not hear of this. She flatly rejected that suggestion. Not only that, she became very very upset, very emotional, and in the end after haranguing him for about an hour, she accused him of wanting to desert her and she also dragged up an affair which he'd had with another girl two years after their marriage, which means about twenty eight years previously. And eventually she declared that he'd have to make up his mind and choose between her and Buddhism. She said she'd tolerated his interest in Buddhism quite long enough. And unless he gave up all his Buddhist interests immediately, she'd leave him, and take the children with her. And she added that she'd take the dog too! Now Robert is very fond of his family, he's fond of the dog as well. He didn't know what to do. For a couple of weeks he was really out of his mind. He couldn't work. He used to go to the Bank and just sit there. He just couldn't do anything. He'd just sit there with his head in his hands, and sometimes the Bank Manager had had to send him home, when they started talking about him at the Bank and wondering what on earth was the matter. They realised it was something at home, but they didn't like to say anything. And one dreadful day things got so bad and the tension and the pressure mounted up so much that Robert even thought of committing suicide. But in the end, after thinking it over very very carefully, and trying to be as honest as he possibly could with himself, he decided he could not be responsible for splitting the family - two of the children were still quite young, so he gave in to his wife's demands, his wife's ultimatum, and the Buddhist movement hasn't seen him since.

Case No 10. Derek and Ursula are both in their early twenties. For the last two years, they've both been very much interested in Eastern philosophy and mysticism, and they both meditate quite a lot; if anything Ursula meditates more. She in fact has spent some three months meditating on her own in a cottage in Cornwall, and now the pair of them, Derek and Ursula have decided to go to India, and live there. They feel they just don't belong here. Derek wants to specialise in Hatha Yoga, he wants to become perhaps a teacher of Hatha Yoga, and Ursula wants to put in more and more meditation, so obviously, with these sorts of interests and ideals, India is the place for both of them so off they're going. There's only one little problem, and that is that at about the same time that they became interested in Eastern philosophy, they had a baby, and they don't want to take the baby with them to India. In the first place, they think the climate might not agree with the baby. Besides, he'd quite evidently tie them down too much, so they're thinking of having him adopted. But Ursula's parents are very very much attached to the baby, and they just won't hear of the baby being adopted. Now so far, Derek and Ursula have been unable to decide what to do. They're still thinking over, still discussing the problem. But Ursula unfortunately has been feeling rather angry with both her parents.

Well, here are ten cases. They're all cases illustrating the title of tonight's lecture. That is to say they're all cases illustrating the problem of human relationships. I must confess that originally, when I started thinking about tonight's lecture I was not going to give a lecture at all. I thought it might be a good idea, at least I played with the idea, that I should simply present you with a couple of dozen, maybe even thirty, such case histories, from my own personal case book, and then leave you in the course of your group discussion, to sort out all the problems for yourselves. However, after thinking the matter over, I decided that this would be perhaps not quite fair. It would no doubt be asking a bit too much. So I decided to divide tonight's lecture into two parts. In the first part, I decided to give a number of cases, and this has now been done. In the second part I decided I should draw a few conclusions, at least tentative conclusions from the cases, as well as lay down a few general principles in the light of which the whole question of personal relationships has to be considered, and this part of course now follows.

In this part of the lecture I am going to be rather briefer than usual, because I want to leave you with plenty of time for discussion. It's more than likely that at least some of you will have to face problems of this sort some day. Some of you may even be facing problems of this sort now. Now before proceeding to draw any conclusions from the cases I've described I want to make just two points. The first point is that at present we are concerned with the problem of personal relationships, specifically within the

context of the higher evolution of the individual: because that's what our whole series is devoted to. We're not concerned that is to say, with the problem of personal relationships in general. That is a very very much wider topic; we're not concerned with that. We're concerned this evening with the problem of personal relationships within the context of the higher evolution of the individual, not with those problems of personal relationships which arise as between ordinary people, that is to say people who make no conscious effort to develop or to evolve.

Second point: that all the ten cases I have described fall within my own personal knowledge, and I've altered only the names and a few minor details. All the cases, as you've probably noticed, have been drawn from within the Buddhist movement, but this certainly does not mean that the problem or problems with which we are dealing are confined to the Buddhist movement. They can arise within any spiritual movement whatsoever; can arise wherever and whenever the individual tries to evolve, whether he tries to do this on his own, or in association with other people; whether he tries to do it within the framework of a religious tradition in the more narrow sense, or within the framework of psychology, the fine arts and so on.

Now let's deal very briefly with the conclusions I mentioned. First of all it's obvious that personal relationships are of many different kinds, and Buddhism traditionally speaks of six kinds of personal relationships. First of all, there's the relationship between parent and child. Secondly, the relationship between friend and friend. Thirdly the relationship between husband and wife. Fourthly, the relationship between master and servant. Fifthly, relationship between teacher and pupil. Sixthly and lastly, the relationship between monk and layman. These are the six standard Buddhist relationships, as described for example in the (?) Sutta. If we go a little further afield, if we turn to the far East, we find that Confucianism thinks in terms of five types of personal relationship. First of all there's the relationship between ruler and subject, sometimes it's described as the relationship between prince and minister; then secondly relationship between parent and child. Three, between husband and wife. Four, between brother and brother. Five, between friend and friend. So six standard relationships according to Buddhist tradition, and five standard relationships according to Confucianism.

Now we may observe that as compared with modern times, a more equal importance seems to have been attached to these relationships. It isn't as though one or two were of over-riding importance and all the rest comparatively nowhere. Number It is as though the emphasis, as though the importance of the relationships compared with modern times was more or less evenly distributed, so that in your life, you had all these relationships, all six, all five kinds of personal relationship, and all were very important to you. Not that one or two were important, and the rest not very important. All six, or all five, were very important to you. At the same time we have to recognise that each tradition had, as among the relationships, its own special, even distinctive emphasis. All the relationships were important, even very important, but one or two were sometimes singled out as being somewhat more important than the others. For instance, the Buddhist tradition emphasised the relationship between teacher and pupil, and between monk and layman. Here is the distinctive emphasis in this field of Buddhism. In much the same way, Confucianism emphasised the relationship between parents and child. And it's because Confucianism emphasised the importance of the relationship between parents and child, that Confucianism regards filial piety as the greatest of all the virtues.

Now we know that the ancient Greeks had no particular list, no lists of relationships, but it's well known also that the Greeks regarded the relationship between friend and friend as the most important in life, and the most significant from the standpoint of cultural values. If we recollect for instance, that very moving scene described by Plato, the death of Socrates, we find an example there. We find Socrates bidding, sometime before his death, a rather formal farewell to his wife and children who are described as sobbing bitterly. And he then dismisses them, and he devotes his last hours to discussion with his friends. He dies, surrounded not by his wife and children, they've been banished to the inner apartments, he dies surrounded by his friends. Now it is interesting incidentally, and this is quite incidental, to compare the last hours of the founders of the three great universal religions, and perhaps the comparison will be found not without significance.

If we turn to the Mahaparinibbana Sutta of the Pali Canon, we find that the Buddha dies, achieves Parinirvana, surrounded by his disciples, as many of them as could possibly be present on that occasion. If we turn to the Gospels, we find that Christ died in the presence of his disciples, his closer disciples, and his mother. If we turn to Islamic traditions we find, that Muhammed died in the arms of his favourite wife. So perhaps there is some significance here. However it's time we got back to our ten cases.

Now if we analyse these ten cases, we shall find that the problems of human relationships with which they're concerned arise within the context of only four different kinds of relationship. They arise within the context of the relationship between husband and wife, which I take as including that between boyfriend and girlfriend; in the second place between parents and child; thirdly between friend and

friend, and fourthly between sister on the one hand, and brothers and sisters on the other. We don't find among our ten cases any example of a problem arising in the relationship between teacher and pupil, or in the relationship between master and servants, or employer and employee, or between ruler and subject or prince and minister. We'll go into the significance of this a little later on. Analysing further, we find that out of the ten cases, six problems belong to the husband/wife boyfriend/girlfriend category; two to the parent/child category, one to the friend/friends category, and one to sister and brothers and sisters category.

Now it's true that I've cited only ten cases, but I think and my overall experience leads me to think that these ten cases are fairly representative, and I think we shall not go very far astray if we accept too that the conclusions which we may draw, at least tentatively from these cases, are representative too. I don't think the conclusions would be substantially different if they were based on a hundred cases instead of on ten cases. I think we would still find that within the context of the higher evolution, sixty per cent of the problems of personal relationships that arise, arise or occur as between husband and wife, or between boyfriend and girlfriend, and there are definite reasons why this should be so.

We may say to begin with that under the conditions of modern civilisation for most people, the man/woman relationship is the central one and the most important one. But this has not always been the case. If we turn to the traditions of ancient civilisations, we find that they would think that the idea that a man's wife for instance, or his girlfriend was the most important person in his life, they would find this idea rather ridiculous. Now this is not to say that they are necessarily right, but it is at least important for us to remind ourselves that people have not always felt as we felt today. We may say that nowadays, the relationship between man on the one hand, and woman on the other, is regarded as central because other relationships are either rather difficult or have tended to fall into abeyance.

As we noticed among our ten cases, there's no case, no problem of personal relationship belonging to the category of teacher/pupil or master/servant or ruler/subject, and this is largely because these three relationships have all been very considerably, even seriously depersonalised. Let's try and imagine what it was like in the old days. In the old days, centuries ago, maybe even in some areas even one century ago, if you were a servant or a worker you more likely than not, lived with your master, with your employer, under the same roof. You shared his life, his day-to-day existence. You very often ate at the same table; you ate the same food. You attended the same festivals, you were a member of the family, and there was very close day-to-day contact. And because of the close day-to-day contact, which was especially noticeable under the traditional apprenticeship system, a very close personal relationship could develop, could grow up between the master on the one hand, and the servant or the worker or the workman on the other. This sort of relationship survived in some places as I've said, even down to a hundred years ago. I remember just a few weeks ago, I was reading a book on Dickens, and the author of this book on Dickens pointed out how in several of Dickens' novels, the relationship between the master and the servant were still portrayed in very feudal terms, because these terms were still real for many people at the time that Dickens was writing. For instance, in *Pickwick Papers*, which I suppose most of you have read, in *Pickwick Papers*, Mr Pickwick goes off to gaol, he's been found guilty of "Breach of Promise" as far as I remember, and he's got to spend two years in, gaol. So what does his faithful servant, his faithful retainer, Sam Weller Junior say? He says "I'm going with you" because in those happy days, you could take your whole family to prison if you were confined, or your servants too if you had any, or if they wanted to follow you, so Sam Weller said "I'm going too". So Mr Pickwick is pleased, but of course he's surprised, and he says "But Sam, what about the young woman that you're engaged to? How will she feel about it if you are in gaol for two years?" He said "She'll be happy to wait for me". He said "If she isn't, she's not the sort of young woman I took her for and I'll find another". He said "My duty is to serve you."

So this was the old feudal attitude. Master came first, before even the betrothed, perhaps in some cases, even before the wife. Master came first, because there was a real definite strong personal relationship between the master and the servant, and you still see this at work very much in the East. I remember when I was in India, when I was settled in Kalimpong, I sometimes used to have to engage Tibetan or Nepalese cooks and gardeners and so on, one noticed that these people immediately took up a very loyal feudal sort of attitude, and they weren't content just to work for you and just get some money at the end of the month. Some of them didn't even want to work for money, they were much more interested in having a good master with whom they could have a good human personal relationship. But this of course is dying out in the East with the progress of modern Western civilisation.

Nowadays you just can't have in most cases any sort of personal relationship with your master or with your employer. Usually you just work for an impersonal company or department. You may have superiors, but you've got no master, and if problems do arise between you and your superiors, they're not real problems of personal relationships, they're problems, personal problems in the rather narrow petty negative sense of the term. In much the same way in the old days, you had a Chief, or you had a Lord,

in the feudal sense, or you had a sort of captain who led you into battle. In other words you had someone who was more powerful than you, who was stronger than you, who protected you, whom you served, and to whom you were unconditionally loyal, and with whom you therefore had a real personal relationship. And under the feudal system, this relationship, the relationship with your feudal superior, your lord, was very often the most important relationship in a man's life, even emotionally, the most important, to which he would if necessary, sacrifice other relationships.

But nowadays, there's no such relationship. For better or for worse, you've got no lords, no master, no feudal superior, all you have is a very remote impersonal relationship with the Government of the day, or with the administration. You may, once or twice in your lifetime, get round to shaking hands with your local MP but that's about as close as you ever get.

Coming to the relationship between teachers and pupils, we do still have teachers of course, but even here, or here too a real personal relationship is comparatively rare. It may be possible at the Higher Educational levels. It's certainly possible at the Universities where one has a tutorial system. I found for instance, when I was at Berkeley when I was teaching at Berkeley in the United States, Berkeley College of Yale University, that it was possible since I had only a few students, to develop with some of them at least a more personal type of relationship.

But under the usual sort of classroom system, one teacher has got many pupils - forty pupils, fifty pupils maybe, maybe different classes that he sees or teaches at different times of the day, and of course it's a sort of rule among teachers that you must not have favourites. In other words, you mustn't develop relationships more with one child than with the others. And even apart from that, we usually come in contact, most of us with teachers only when we're comparatively young, when we're not mature enough for a personal, a real personal relationship anyway. And when we're older, we don't usually think in terms of learning anything, so of course we don't usually come in contact with any teachers then.

Now amongst our ten cases, there's only one case of a problem in personal relationship arising as between friends, and that of course is case Number 6, the case of John aged 19, who found that his interest in Buddhism was taking him further and further away from those who had been his friends. The fact that in modern life this sort of relationship is comparatively rare is probably due to the fact that in many circles, in many peoples' mind there's quite a fear of homosexuality. So that any strong emotional relationship between two people of the same sex, especially between two men, tends, in our times, to be rather suspect.

We can also say that relationships between or among brothers and sisters are also much less important than formerly. This is partly because some of us don't have brothers and sisters at all. If you hear your great uncles, or great aunts, or grandmothers or grandfathers talking, you may hear them referring to whole regiments of brothers and sisters. But we don't have as many as that nowadays, in many cases, we're an only child. So this leaves us, this is the net result of it all, this leaves us with only two effective personal relationships in our lives nowadays. The ancient Indians had six, the ancient Buddhists had six, the Chinese had five, but we, for all practical purposes, have in our lives only two effective, or two kinds of effective personal relationship. In other words with our parents, and with or between husband and wife. And of these two, that is to say, the relationship between parents on the one hand, and children on the other, and between husband and wife, it's the latter relationship which tends to be for most people by far the more important.

So for statistical reasons alone therefore, it isn't surprising that 60 percent of the problems of personal relationships, within the context of the higher evolution arise in this field, or within this particular relationship. Now there are also certain complicating factors here. For instance, there's the factor of sex, because it's within the man/woman relationship that one's sexual needs are satisfied. And under the conditions of modern life, these needs are not only biological, but also psychological. For instance, you find the man, as so often happens, has got a dull routine sort of job, and he cannot assert himself in it, he cannot be anything in it, he cannot express himself in it, he cannot assert himself in it, in a word, cannot be a man in it. So what happens? He tends very often to rely on or to use sex more and more as an outlet for that feeling or that wish, or that desire he has to express himself in other relationships, and other aspects of life.

In addition to this, another complicating factor is that as in most civilisations the man/woman relationship is institutionalised. And it's institutionalised as marriage. It's interesting to reflect that apart from the parent/child relationship which is on a rather different basis, marriage is the only one of our relationships that we legalise and institutionalise in this sort of way. In other words, it's not just a personal relationship, not just a personal relationship or understanding between two people, it's a legal contract, a legal obligation, which under certain circumstances is even enforceable in a Court of Law. So it's not always easy to change, or to make changes, and this too leads to difficulties.

So we can now begin to see our conclusions organising themselves a little, and even pointing in a definite direction. We may say broadly speaking that nowadays, so far as personal relationships are concerned, we tend to put all our eggs in one basket. There used to be six baskets, or five baskets, but now, for all practical purposes, there's only one basket, that is the man/woman basket. So therefore our emotional interests and our emotional investment in this relationship is very very great indeed. And of course the whole situation is made more complex by the factors which I've mentioned of sex, and the fact that marriage is an institution.

Now if it so happens, that due to certain circumstances, a conflict arises between our need to evolve, our need to grow, our need to develop, on the one hand, and our relationship, either with our marriage partner, or boyfriend, or girlfriend on the other, then the psychological pressure can be very great indeed, can be tremendous, and we remember in case Number 9, Robert, aged 45, thought of committing suicide. So this means that we should be very watchful in the field of personal relationships, should be very aware, otherwise, we may fall back, we may be pulled back, we may fail to evolve, we may give up trying to evolve.

Now just one more conclusion. We had six cases of a problem of personal relationships arising as between a man on the one hand and a woman on the other. Now in five out of these six, we found it was the man who wanted to evolve, but the woman who was reluctant, and perhaps wanted to hold him back. In only one case we found a woman who wanted to evolve, and a man who was reluctant to allow her to evolve, and this is perhaps surprising. But I think, if I bear in mind my own experience, and what I have observed, I think I can say that this is representative. Certainly it is representative so far as the Buddhist movement in this country is concerned, and it perhaps suggests that in this matter, men even have got to be more watchful than women have.

Now finally, for six principles. We've hardly any time left, so I'm going to state them in aphoristic form with the minimum of comment.

1. Personal relationships are necessary for human development. Personal relationships are necessary for human development.
2. Within the context of the higher evolution, a personal relationship is possible only with another person who is also trying to evolve. Within the context of the higher evolution, a personal relationship is possible only with another person who is also trying to evolve.
3. As we evolve, we tend to discard most if not all, our old personal relationships. As we evolve we tend to discard most if not all our old personal relationships. And this of course is something that many of us find very very difficult to accept. It sounds very very harsh, that as you grow, as you develop you just have to leave behind family, friends, other people with whom you've had personal relationships in the past because you're just going beyond, you're going out of their ken as it were. You're interested in things that they've got no knowledge of, no interest in. You can't help going out of contact, even out of relationship. But what else can one expect,? One can generalise by saying that the more we evolve, we have less and less in common with more people.
4. The fourth principle. Problems arise within a personal relationship when one person wishes to evolve and the other does not.
5. Such problems are difficult to resolve because only one part of us wants to evolve. Part of us does not want to evolve and sides with our partner, as it were, against ourselves.
6. As we evolve we tend to form new personal relationships, relationships with other people who are also evolving.

In other words, as we evolve we tend to join a spiritual community. But with this we come to the subject of our next week's lecture, so it's time for us to close this one.