

ASPECTS OF THE HIGHER EVOLUTION OF THE INDIVIDUAL

Lecture 89: the Individual and the Spiritual Community

I'm going to start tonight with a fragment, not a very big fragment, of autobiography. I first came to know about Buddhism, about what in the East is usually called the Dharma, the teaching of the Way to Enlightenment when I was about 10 or 11 years of age and I came to know about it mainly through a series of articles which I read in an encyclopedia. But I can't say that at that time, at that comparatively tender age, I was very deeply influenced by what I came to know, by what I read. I wasn't really in any way deeply affected by Buddhism until I was about 16, and it was then that I happened to read those two very famous works, those two very famous Buddhist texts or scriptures, the Diamond Sutra, and the Sutra of Wei Lang, and these made a very deep impression upon me indeed. In fact I may even go so far as to say that through them I had my first glimpse as it were, of what we call in the Buddhist tradition, Perfect Vision. And it was from that time onwards, after reading those two works, after having that glimpse, that I started considering myself to be a Buddhist.

But it was fully two years before I came in contact, in direct personal contact with other Buddhists. For two years I was quite on my own, reading, learning, trying to understand, even eventually writing about Buddhism as well; but all on my own during this period no contact, no personal contact with other Buddhists; contact with Buddhism itself only through books. And at that time I was reading everything that I could possibly lay my hands on, on the subject of Buddhism, as well as on other forms of religion, spiritual tradition, and mysticism.

Now this, all this was of course, quite a number of years ago. I'm not going to tell you exactly how many, but it was quite a number of years ago. But I find, I find that that experience of mine is still the experience in this country of many people. Their first contact with Buddhism comes about through books, through literature, and personal contact with other Buddhists, or other people interested in Buddhism, or other people trying to follow the path of Buddhism that comes comparatively later. Sometimes it comes very much later indeed. I have even on occasion met people who've told me they were as it were on their own studying Buddhism, reading about it, even trying to practise meditation, without meeting any other Buddhists for 10, 12, 15 years. People who live in remote parts of the country where there is no Buddhist group and where there is no direct contact available of any kind.

Now we know that we all tend to be conditioned by our experience. And especially do we tend to be conditioned by our early experience, and this holds good even of our experience of Buddhism itself, at least it holds good for a time. Suppose we have become accustomed to treading the Path alone, entirely on our own; suppose we have become accustomed to studying alone, even meditating alone, thinking all the time our own thoughts; communing as it were with ourselves, not having the opportunity of exchange of thought, real communication with any other similar like-minded person. Suppose that is the state of affairs. Then, we may find that even after we have succeeded in contacting or have just happened to contact other Buddhists, we may still find ourselves tending to continue in the same sort of way. We may even find ourselves wondering, even after coming into contact with other Buddhists, with a group perhaps, even find ourselves wondering if it's necessary to belong, to join a Buddhist group at all. We may not in fact feel like joining one. It may simply be of course that we're not particularly attracted by the groups that we know, at least some of them; maybe we've gone along once or twice, and maybe the members, the people that we've met there, even though quite good people, even though all Buddhists perhaps, maybe they've seemed just a bit dull, or perhaps they've seemed a bit neurotic, or maybe they've seemed a bit quarrelsome, or a bit too conventional, or a bit too elderly, or maybe a bit too young. Because we may say after all, one does not necessarily like other people just because they happen to be following the same teaching that you're following yourself. The personal factor enters in and plays a very important role.

On the other hand, there's another kind of case. One might have belonged to a Buddhist group of one sort or another for quite a time, and one might have derived a considerable benefit from that group. One might have been going faithfully along to lectures, meditation classes and so on for quite a few years, and apparently one has made quite steady regular progress. But nevertheless

one day, one might start thinking: Perhaps it would be better for one to be on one's own, at least for a bit. One might feel a bit tired of always being with other people; Always talking with other people, studying with other people, meditating with other people, listening to lectures with other people, hearing other people talk about Buddhism, always having other people around.

Or it may be that you've had perhaps more than your fair share of organizational responsibility; maybe you've been helping to run the group for quite a while; maybe you've been secretary, maybe you've been treasurer, or maybe you've been a committee member; maybe you've had to hire halls, and maybe you've had to organize printing, and maybe all sorts of other things of that sort, so you've got a bit tired of it, and you think "Well maybe I'd be better off spiritually for a bit on my own". Or again, it may be that as a result of being a member of the group, as a result of all that meditation, as a result of what you understood, as a result of your contact, even your communication with other people, certain things have started coming up. Those psychic depths have started moving, at least have started stirring, and you feel all sorts of strange uncomfortable, uneasy, maybe faintly terrifying things beginning to bubble up. And there's something in yourself that doesn't want all this to bubble up, so you start thinking- "Well, this won't do at all, we can't have this. Let's put the lids down on it all. This is just too much to face". So you leave the group. You leave the group because you are unable to face those problems, those personal problems, those raw truths about yourself, which are beginning to become evident in the context of the life of the group, and the sort of pressure, the sort of psychic and the spiritual pressure even that the group exerts upon its individual members. But whatever the reason, whether one just wants to be on one's own for a bit, or whether one has had a bit too much of the organizational side of things, or whether one is just not willing, not ready to face up to one's own emerging problems, one wants to be on one's own, at least for a while. So it's in this sort of way that there arises the question with which we're concerned tonight. And that is the question of the individual and the spiritual community.

And this question of course arises, again we must remind ourselves, within the context of the Higher Evolution of the Individual. Let's go back for a minute to the first lecture in the series, there we saw that the Higher Evolution, the Higher Evolution of man, the Higher Evolution of the Individual consists essentially in a development of consciousness, of awareness. We saw that there are four main stages, four great stages, of development of consciousness, of awareness. There's first of all, simple consciousness which we share with the animals; then there's self-consciousness, of which we possess at present only the bare rudiments; then there's transcendental consciousness, which for the most part we just haven't developed at all yet; and finally there's absolute consciousness, which is altogether beyond our ken at the moment.

Now for the time being, that is to say, within the context of this series of lectures, we are concerned much more with the development of the second and third stages of consciousness, that is to say with the development of self consciousness, leading to the development of transcendental consciousness. Recapitulating very very briefly indeed, by self consciousness, we mean "seeing ourselves as we really are". By transcendental consciousness, we mean "seeing the world as it really is. Seeing really, seeing truly, or if one likes, seeing reality".

Now the development even of these two stages, leaving aside absolute consciousness, the development even of these two stages, the development out of one's simple consciousness, of self consciousness, out of one's self consciousness, of transcendental consciousness is very very difficult indeed, and no-one should underestimate that difficulty. As one tries, as one strives, as one struggles even, to develop self consciousness, transcendental consciousness, many questions, even many problems, practical, personal problems arise, and it's with some of these problems arising as one tries, as one strives to develop self consciousness, transcendental consciousness, as one tries to evolve, as one tries to follow the path of the Higher Evolution, it's with some of these problems, some of the most important of these problems, that this series of lectures and discussions is concerned.

Now we went on to say in our second lecture, that one of the most important problems that can possibly arise within this particular context, the context of the Higher Evolution, is connected with awareness, and is an important problem because awareness itself constitutes the main growing point of the Higher Evolution: unless there's awareness, there's no Higher Evolution; where there is awareness, there is Higher Evolution. To the extent that there is awareness, there

is Higher Evolution; to the extent that there is Higher Evolution, there is awareness; the two are as closely, as intimately, connected as that. Just as when you see on the bare branch of a tree a bud, you know that sooner or later, there will be a leaf, even a blossom, so in the same way, if in anybody's life, regardless of other factors, other circumstances, if in anybody's life one sees some glimmer of awareness, some presence of awareness, then one can be sure, one can be certain, sooner or later, that for that person there will be some spiritual development, some Higher Evolution. Because awareness is the main growing point of that Higher Evolution.

Now this being the case, it becomes all the more important to develop the right kind of awareness, and not to develop the wrong kind of awareness. Now what does one mean by the wrong kind of awareness? By the wrong kind of awareness, as we saw in some detail all those weeks ago, one means alienated awareness. By alienated awareness, one means 'awareness of ourselves, especially our feelings and emotions, without at the same time actually experiencing them'. This is alienated awareness. The awareness that we must develop, the right awareness, is what I term integrated awareness, by which we mean 'awareness of ourselves, while at the same time, actually experiencing ourselves, especially experiencing our own feelings, our own emotions'. Not 'not experiencing' them, not repressing them, not sweeping them under the carpet, and in the long run, even though the development of alienated awareness may be necessary within certain very definite limits, for a certain very definite limited period of time, may be necessary, in the long run, it's only the integrated awareness which is conducive to the Higher Evolution.

Now the same kind of problem arises within another context: arises in connection with individuality, or selfhood, or to use other terms which are widely current, in connection with personality, in connection with the ego. As we saw in our third lecture, all these four terms, individuality, self or selfhood, personality, ego, are used in a double sense: they are used in a positive sense, and in a negative sense; in a good sense and a bad sense and there's a lot of confusion in people's minds regarding these terms, regarding the value of these terms and what they stand for just because of this double meaning that each of them has, and this double usage.

For instance as we saw in some detail on that occasion, we saw that some authorities will encourage us to develop the self, whereas others will encourage us to deny the self. And this sort of contradiction, this sort of confusion we find in connection with all these terms, so that one hardly knows sometimes where one stands, or what one is to do. But if one sorts it all out, if one analyses the matter one finds that one should cultivate the positive, and eradicate the negative self, individuality and so on, and by the positive individuality, the positive self, we mean the integrated one, the one that is not split, the one, all of whose energies have been brought together, flow in the same direction; and of course by the negative individuality, the negative self, we mean the unintegrated, the one that is split up into fragments as it were; split as between perhaps conscious and unconscious; split as between intellect and emotion, and so on. Integration we very broadly defined on that occasion as 'integration of our total being, conscious and unconscious, intellectual and emotional' and we saw that it constituted a very important step on the path of the Higher Evolution.

Now these are two very important problems, that of alienated awareness, that of individuality true and false, and there are other problems that arise. Problems that arise in connection with the question of psychological types; a problem that arises as regards the relative claims of meditation and psychotherapy; and a problem again, in fact many problems arising in the field of personal relationships. In our fourth lecture we saw that the various theories of psychological types give us as it were different cross-sections of ourselves; if we make use of them, if we utilize them, we find that they enable us to know ourselves better, enable us to know what methods of spiritual development, what spiritual exercises will help us most. Both meditation and psychotherapy as we saw in our next lecture have a number of methods, a number of exercises if you like at their disposal, but those of meditation go considerably farther than those of psychotherapy, and the methods of meditation moreover form part of a complete and coherent scheme of spiritual self-development, and this scheme represents the direct application of a whole philosophy of existence.

Now finally as we saw last week, there's the problem of personal relationships. Problems arise within a personal relationship when one person wishes to evolve, and the other does not. Such

problems we saw usually arise within the context of the man/woman relationship mainly because it is this relationship which is the central one for most people nowadays, under the conditions of modern society and modern civilisation. We also saw, we also took notice of the fact that as we evolve, we do tend to discard most, if not all, our old personal relationships. We tend to develop new personal relationships with other people who are also evolving. Now this is the point that we reached at the end of last week's lecture. This is the point at which we've arrived in the course of the last six weeks.

Now bearing all this in mind, using this as a sort of general background, we're going to break up tonight's lecture into six parts. Tonight I'm going to deal with first the importance of the spiritual community. Second, what the spiritual community is not. Third, the foundations of the spiritual community. Fourth, joining the spiritual community. Five, is the spiritual community necessary? Six, dangers facing the spiritual community. Between them, these six topics should give us some insight into the relation between the individual on the one hand, and the spiritual community on the other.

First of all, the importance of the spiritual community. I'm not going to spend too much time on this topic, I'm just going to illustrate it with the help of two references to Buddhist tradition. I'm going to confine myself to these two references, because in a way the whole lecture illustrates the importance of the spiritual community. The first of these two references relates to a comment on the subject of kalyana-mitrata by Ananda. I'll explain what kalyana-mitrata is in a minute. Ananda as some of you no doubt know was the Buddha's own first cousin, and after the Buddha's attainment of enlightenment, Ananda became his disciple. Not only did Ananda become his disciple, but for many years, I think it was for more than a quarter of a century, Ananda was the Buddha's constant companion, and personal attendant. Wherever the Buddha went, Ananda went too. And Ananda had an understanding with the Buddha that if by any chance, Ananda was not able to be present when the Buddha delivered a discourse, or explained certain topics to other disciples, then when they were alone together, the Buddha would repeat to Ananda everything that he had said. This was their understanding, because Ananda had a very very retentive memory, apparently he was the equivalent in those days of the modern tape-recorder. Whatever the Buddha said, Ananda remembered, he was word-perfect, you couldn't fault him. So he used to make a point of hearing everything that the Buddha ever said, and tucking it away in his retentive memory, and reproducing it later on for the benefit of other disciples, so of course after the Buddha's death, after the Buddha's Parinirvana, Ananda was of inestimable value to the community as a whole, because he remembered so many things that the Buddha had said, remembered so many teachings.

All right, what do we mean by 'kalyana-mitrata'? Kalyana-mitrata is a compound word, it's made up of the Sanskrit, also Pali word 'kalyana' plus 'mitrata' or 'mittata' in Pali. Now 'kalyana' has got various meanings - 'kalyana' means 'good', means 'lucky', it means 'auspicious', it means 'lovely' or 'beautiful' and it also means spiritual. And 'mitrata' what does that mean? 'Mitrata' has a more simple and straight-forward meaning, 'mitrata' means 'friendship'; it also means 'fellowship'. The word from which it is derived is the word 'mitra' which means simply 'friend', and it's from the same word, this same root that we get the expression 'maitribhavana' or Pali 'mettabhavana' which is one of our common, our standard methods of meditation. So kalyanamitrata, or kalyanamittata can be rendered as 'good association,' or 'spiritual fellowship' or even 'spiritual community' - kalyanamitrata.

Now what does Ananda, the Buddha's cousin and disciple and constant companion have to say on this topic? There's a passage in the scriptures where the Buddha and Ananda are represented as being together, and apparently, Ananda had been thinking, apparently held been thinking hard on this subject of kalyanamitrata. And after a long period of silence during which both the Buddha and Ananda had just been sitting quietly together, Ananda as it were burst out, and he said to the Buddha "Lord, I think that kalyanamitrata," that is to say spiritual fellowship, spiritual community, "is half the spiritual life". In other words, if you've got that, then you've got half the things that you need; if you've got other like-minded people around you, people who are also making an effort, people who are also trying to evolve, that's half the battle won, so he says "I think that kalyanamitrata is half the spiritual life". So having said that, he sat back, maybe waiting for the Buddha to say "Yes Ananda, you're perfectly right," but the Buddha said "No". He said "Ananda I disagree". He said "Ananda, you're wrong". So Ananda was very surprised

even though he was used to the Buddha's ways, he was still surprised. So the Buddha said "No, kalyanamitrata" spiritual fellowship, spiritual community, is not half the spiritual life". He said "It's the whole of it". So this is what the Buddha said in response to Ananda's comment.

Now our second reference is no less explicit. But it's not bound up with any particular incident. It's bound up with, connected with, if you like interwoven with, the whole Buddhist tradition. It's well known, that every religion, every spiritual tradition, has certain concepts, certain symbols, certain ideas if you like, certain credal forms that express, that enshrine, the highest values of the tradition concerned. Now in the case of Buddhism, all its highest values, all the things that it really stands for, all the things with which it is most deeply involved, all the things to which the professing and practising Buddhist is expected to commit himself to, all these are comprised, one might even say, enshrined, in what we call the Three Jewels, also translatable as the "three treasures" or the "three most precious things". What these are is of course known to every Buddhist, every student of Buddhism, and in case there's anybody not familiar with them, I'll just very briefly describe them.

The first of the Three Jewels, the first of the Three Treasures, or the Three Most Precious Things, enshrining the highest values of the Buddhist tradition, the first is the Buddha himself. That is to say the enlightened spiritual master, the enlightened spiritual teacher, the one who has seen for himself the truth, ultimate reality face to face; the one who in the terms of our present series, our present approach, is the 'new man', in the fullest, and the highest sense of that term; who is the embodiment we may say, the living embodiment of the highest stage of consciousness, that is to say, absolute consciousness, who has reached it, realised it, become one with it; the one who is moreover himself the representative of the highest spiritual ideal, who shows us all what we can be, what we can experience, if we make the effort; the one who is in a way, in some forms of Buddhism at least, even the symbol of reality itself. So this is the Buddha, the first of the Three Jewels. First also of the Three Refuges. And then secondly the Dharma. The word "dharma" has many meanings, but here it means 'the real truth'. It's often translated as the 'doctrine' but that's much too abstract, much too conceptual, and those who have attended at all carefully to my current translation of the Dhammapada which is appearing in our Newsletter, comparing it with other versions, will have noticed, that I've throughout translated 'dharma' in this sense as 'the real truth'. If one likes, one can also call it the 'teaching', but understanding it as the teaching, the verbal communication which expresses the real truth, the real truth of life, the real truth about existence, about human existence, cosmic existence. We can also think of the Dharma as being the path leading to enlightenment, as representing as covering the whole course of what we call the Higher Evolution of man, of the individual.

So this is the Dharma, the second of the Three Jewels, second of the Three Refuges. And then comes thirdly, the Sangha, or strictly speaking the Aryasangha, that is to say the noble society, as it can be translated, or the 'spiritual community' as it can better be translated. This spiritual community, being very technical for the moment, is said to be made up of four pairs of spiritual persons, or eight individuals. You notice the term 'the four pairs of spiritual persons or eight individuals' - we use these expressions in the regular daily chant by the way when describing the qualities of the Sangha, or the spiritual community.

And these four pairs of spiritual persons, or eight individuals, represent different stages in the evolution of consciousness. They represent, they stand for, stages intermediate between transcendental consciousness on the one hand, and absolute consciousness on the other; they're subdivisions of this fourth great stage but we're not concerned with that at the moment. Just for the moment we're concerned with the importance, which is here given to the spiritual community; with the fact that the spiritual community is included among the highest values of the whole Buddhist tradition, along with the Buddha, and the Dharma. It's almost as though, within say the context of the Christian tradition, one spoke not of the Father and the Son and the Holy Ghost, it's as though one spoke of the Father, the Son, and the Church, ranking the Church as it were, with the Father and the Son, and leaving out the Holy Ghost, so it's a bit like that in the case of Buddhism. You've got the Buddha, the supreme spiritual ideal, the embodiment of the goal, the embodiment of reality, then you've got the Dharma, the way leading to that, the real truth, the teaching, and then, on the same level as it were, you've got the Sangha, the spiritual community.

So in Buddhism, in the Buddhist tradition, the Sangha, the spiritual community is given this tremendous significance, this tremendous importance, it is elevated to being coequal and coequal with the Buddha and the Dharma, with the teacher, and with the teaching.

Now secondly, what the spiritual community is not. I've decided to put that next before even trying to say what the spiritual community is, because there are so many misunderstandings on the subject, and it is perhaps even more important to get the misunderstandings out of the way, than to have a right understanding. And in any case, a right understanding isn't possible, until those misunderstandings have been removed.

Now let me as it were say the most important thing first. Say as briefly and also as bluntly as possible, say that in the first place the spiritual community is not a group. The spiritual community is not a group. Now this may appear to contradict what I said at the beginning of the lecture. At the beginning of the lecture I spoke of Buddhist groups. I envisaged someone going along to a Buddhist group, or belonging to a Buddhist group. But at that time I was using the expression 'group' rather loosely. It's now time for us to be rather more precise. And in any case one can also say, and this is perhaps a salutary reminder, one can also say that in any case, even a Buddhist group is not necessarily the same thing as a spiritual community.

Now if a spiritual community is not a group, then a question arises. The question is "what is the difference between the two? Wherein does a spiritual community differ from a group?. Wherein does a group differ from a spiritual community?" And this difference too can be very briefly and bluntly stated, and we can say that a spiritual community consists of individuals, bearing in mind what I said about individuality in lecture No. 3. A spiritual community consists of individuals. This of course suggests that a group does not consist of individuals. And this is in fact the case. In a group, we may say, individuality either does not exist at all, or it tends to be submerged, or at least held very much in abeyance. Now groups as we all know, are of very many kinds. Some are large, some are small. Into some groups we are born, others we have to join, either by paying a subscription, or being initiated, or being drafted, and so on. So let's take a look at a few of these groups, a few kind of groups.

Well first and foremost comes of course the family. Then comes the tribe; then we have the race. These are all groups; they're not spiritual communities. We have the caste, especially in India; on a rather larger scale we've got the nation. We've also got the Church and the Sect, then there's the clan, and again there's the class, and again there's the conventicle, and there's the party, there's the union, again the association; then there's the linguistic group for which we don't have any separate term for some reason or other. Then again there's the regiment, the force, and again the fraternity, and again, the firm. We've got all these sorts of groups. And many of these groups we know have got their own distinctive symbols. You see the symbol and at once you think of that particular group, owning the symbol. For instance there's the Totem Pole, then there's the national flag; then again there's the national anthem, and even in some places, the national dress. There's also the old school tie. And then again the fraternity pin. And of course there's the union ticket, the union card, and there's the party badge. And all these symbols, these symbols of groups of one kind or another have got enormous emotive value and emotive power; for people will die for these things as we know; they'll kill for these things. Not only that, not only do we have symbols of this sort, group symbols of this sort, but we've got various expressions, even various slogans expressive of group loyalties. We've got for instance expressions like "God's own country"; "home sweet home", "land of hope and glory", "the old firm", "church and state", "the empire on which the sun never sets" "Deutschland uber alles", "Heil Hitler", "keep the country white", "don't let the side down", "workers of the world unite" "make love not war"; these are all slogans, expressions, expressive of group loyalties of one kind and another, and they all have as such very strong emotive value, tremendous emotive value. In fact we may say quite categorically, that group feelings go very very deep indeed; there's hardly anybody who isn't involved in, who isn't a member of one group or another, sometimes many groups indeed, and who doesn't feel very very loyal to them. That loyalty may not always be expressed, may not always be conscious, but it's there, deep down, and if sometimes your group loyalties are offended, then from being a very decent innocent lamb-like sort of citizen, you become either a roaring tiger or a raging wolf, ready to devour whoever crosses your path and challenges your particular group, or questions your particular group loyalty. So deep do group loyalties run, so strong are the feelings involved, so ubiquitous, so invariable, so universally distributed amongst human beings, that some people,

some anthropologists and psychologists even go so far as to speak of a group instinct; in the same way that we've got a reproductive instinct and so on, we've got also a group instinct, which impels us, just like those lemmings rushing into the sea, impels us to get together and be with other people and so on.

Now there may, or there may not be, any such thing as a group instinct, the whole question of instinct is nowadays very much under discussion, and some psychologists have gone so far as to deny that there are any such things as instincts at all, and to say that the word 'instinct' is completely misleading, a sort of red herring dragged across the path of psychological science, and just doesn't correspond to anything at all, and had better be dropped. But whether that is so or not, whether there are instincts or aren't instincts, one can certainly say that groups, group formations are encountered, not only on the human, but also on the animal level. Animals form groups as well as human beings. And animal groups seem to fulfill a very definite biological function.

The group provides warmth. If it's bitterly cold, and you're in danger of being frozen to death, well you will huddle together, and you keep warm. Through the winter, the poor animal can't kindle a fire; even sometimes his woolly coat isn't enough, so what does he do? He huddles together with other members of the same species. And they also provide him with shelter, the larger animals shelter the younger ones; also provide him with safety. Even a lion might hesitate to attack a large herd of cattle. And in this way the group on the animal level facilitates the survival of the species concerned.

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..... football match or something of that sort, or maybe when you join the army or you're conscripted and you have to go away and fight, you find as it were the group spirit, the group mind, almost the group soul sort of takes over and you become submerged in the group. There's a sort of collective spirit or group soul as it were that controls you and that you obey. This isn't just sort of occult mythology, this is much more like psychological fact.

The spiritual community on the other hand belongs to the Higher Evolution. It's not a collectivity, it's a community of individuals. Now a spiritual community is not only not a group, but it is not a substitute for a group either. What does this mean? As I said some weeks ago, we're living in times of transition; many things are changing; many old established institutions and customs and traditions are breaking up. And this applies to many of the old established groups. Many of them are breaking up. All kinds of groups are breaking up. For instance the family in some areas is, I won't say breaking up, but beginning to break up. Certainly family ties are not nearly so important not nearly so significant as they used to be. Nowadays, who bothers to keep up connections with his second and third cousins? Well, you hardly know who they are nowadays, but formerly, you kept track of every single person even remotely related to you; this is still very much the case in the East. I remember very very often I'd meet somebody, and he'd introduce me to somebody else and say "He's a close relation of mine - he's my brother". "Oh" I'd say, after a bit, knowing the situation "same mother, same father?". "Oh no, he is my great great grandfather's second son's third daughter's wife's sister's son's husband's father's sister's wife's..... that's the relationship. And this is how they'd say it, just straight off like that. And they kept up the knowledge, they kept up the connection with every single relation that they had, sometimes even a couple of hundred of them. But we don't do that, certainly in the West, most parts of the West any more. Family ties are not so strong as they used to be. The family to some extent is breaking up.

Again many people nowadays leave the country of their birth. This used to happen very rarely. Lots of people in the old days lived without ever moving out of their own village. In the (?) this is held up as an ideal, that throughout your whole life, you hear the sounds of the next village, but you never actually go there. Well very few people are in that situation nowadays; maybe a few people living in the Outer Hebrides and places like that but most people have 'been places' as they say, and lots of people again have left their own country and settled in some foreign land; and not only settled in some foreign land, but had to speak a foreign language; some of course have come as refugees of various kinds. Some even have come because their original countries have been broken up and incorporated in some other country. Others of course come as students, others come for reasons of business, and others of course just come.

Then again of course, classes are much more fluid than they used to be. In the old days, the good old days, if you were born a serf, then a serf you remained. You lived and died a serf. And if you were born a nobleman, then that's what you were all through your life, and you died a nobleman even if you died on the scaffold. But at least you died like a nobleman. You had special privileges, and you could even have your head cut off while you were wearing a velvet cloak! This wasn't permitted to a commoner, and that's a great consolation to you! But nowadays, everything is much more fluid. Nowadays, classes are much more variable - you can move up, you can move down, or at least you can move up; people wouldn't admit perhaps to moving down, but certainly you can move up within the social system. You can subtly and quietly and gently, especially if you move to another part of the country and change your accent, you can move up as regards class, and so on.

And it also happens of course, that nowadays, we often lose touch with our old friends and the people we went to school with, and so on, and the net result of all this is, this loosening of family ties, these movements from one country to another, these shifts within the social system, moving up maybe to a different class, the result is that quite a number of people find themselves eventually rather on their own. There's no particular group to which they belong. Suppose you've no family. Suppose you're living in a foreign country, speaking a foreign language, and you've also changed your class. Well what sort of group have you got that you belong to? Very often no group at all, so you're just on your own. So how do these people feel? Well of course, they feel very lonely. They feel rather cut off. They feel pretty isolated, so what do they do? They quite naturally, even unconsciously, they start looking round for a group. Start looking around for a group to which they can belong. Nice people with whom they can mix, among whom they can settle down. So looking in this way, searching in this way, trying to overcome their own loneliness and isolation, they come in contact perhaps with a spiritual community. In other words they come in contact with a number of individuals who are trying to develop themselves. So they go along, they meet them, they feel there's maybe a lot of friendliness around, there's a good atmosphere, everything seems very positive, so they decide to join; they decide that they too want to belong; so what is happening? They're not joining it as a spiritual community, they're joining it as a group. They're not joining it in order to develop, they're joining it for the sake of warmth. Joining it for the sake of 'togetherness'. Joining it for the sake of companionship. Joining it perhaps because they just can't face any longer the four walls of their cold bedsitter. And in this way, in this sort of way, the spiritual community becomes a substitute for the group. It becomes a substitute for a family. You haven't got a family? All right, you join this spiritual community. You don't belong to any club? All right you join this spiritual community. You don't even belong to a tribe, haven't got a chief of your own? All right, you join the spiritual community. Haven't got a totem of your own? You join the spiritual community.

Now in this connection, it's very interesting to look at certain developments in modern Japan. In modern Japan, what do we find? We find a very interesting thing happening. Nowadays in the West, and in this country too, you find all sorts of good ecclesiastical people complaining that no-one's interested in religion any more. They tell you quite frankly that if only you could get everybody into church, even if you had to shut the doors on them and keep them there, everything would be all right, there'd be peace in the world. Everything would be lovely. But no-one seems to be interested in this simple remedy. Everybody seems to ignore it. And these good people tell us 'well, what we want is a religious revival. We've got to bring religion back, the age of faith and all that, and then we'll solve all these problems that we're confronted by'. But no-one listens. People turn a deaf ear.

But in Japan, it's not like that. They've not had just a religious revival. You find in Japan, since the war, lots of new sects have sprung up, even lots of new religions. And they've even gone better than what people want us to go in this country, they've not had just a religious revival, but all sorts of sects and even new religions have been founded. And I gather after reading a few books on the subject, that there are several hundreds of these all over Japan, new sects, new religions, are mushrooming, there's a new one almost every week apparently, but the teaching of all these new sects and new religions, is mainly Buddhist. It mainly draws upon the Saddharma-pundarika Sutra, general Mahayana Buddhism, Nichiren sect and so on, but the teaching apparently doesn't matter. That's not the most important thing. What matters, in all these sects, in all these new religions, is the organisation. Each of these sects, each of these new religions has of course a founder, and one finds that the founder nearly always takes the title of either

Patriarch, or Arch-Bishop. This is what they usually call themselves, and everyone calls the founder, including the press, ... the Venerable Patriarch of such and such sect, or the Venerable Arch-Bishop of such-and-such new religion, and the founder, whether Patriarch or Arch-Bishop usually has a wife. And these two form the heads of the new sect or new religion. In other words, they're the Archetypal father and mother. And sometimes they're even called father and mother by their followers. And then there are tens of thousands, in some cases hundreds of thousands, in a few cases even millions of devoted followers, all rushing to join these new sects and new religions. Some of them even go into parliament. Now there are many grades, they've got a real hierarchy worked out, some of them have got ten, twelve, fourteen different grades of membership and promotion, and they've all got their distinctive robes, distinctive uniforms, badges, sashes, headgear, all very very colourful indeed, in the way the Japanese can do these things. And then they've got palatial buildings, they've got temples and Arch-bishop's palaces, and some of them have got their own stores, and some have got even their own railway stations and all sorts of things like that, and then they have mass meetings, and mass rallies in great stadiums, and semi-military processions and parades through the streets of the town. Banners and slogans, music and chanting, and everybody doing exactly the same thing at the same time.

Why do they have all this? Why this development? What is happening, what is going on? Clearly the Japanese, the modern Japanese, want, even desperately need, something that they can belong to. They want or they need, psychologically, something to replace the old feudal clan. Over the last hundred years, the feudal clan has disintegrated, and that was the centre in the old days in Japan of one's loyalty. The feudal clan and the head of the feudal clan. But after the mighty restoration, and so on, modernisation, industrialisation of Japan, all that was swept away so the ordinary average Japanese was left as it were in mid-air, without anything to belong to, anything to be loyal to, anything to be devoted to, anything to commit Hare Kiri for. What a terrible state of affairs! The family was too small, even the Japanese family. It was too small to be a focus of loyalty. The country as a whole, Japan, the Land of the Rising Sun, that was too big; in any case nationalism was a Western concept, maybe foreign to the Japanese mind. The Japanese needed something in-between; something much bigger than the family, but not nearly so big as the state, as the nation. Many Japanese of course, adopted as it were, the business firm for which they worked. For many Japanese, the business firm that employs you becomes your group. We don't realize sometimes in this country, how this is in Japan in this respect. You join when you're very young as a junior, and you never leave. In this country any self-respecting young man of 21 has had at least 20 jobs, and worked for 20 different employers, public and private, but not in Japan. You join when you're young - very often you join your father's firm, and you never leave. You live in a house belonging to your firm; you're married under the auspices of your firm; you go on holidays organized by the firm, with fellow employees; and you regard the Chairman of the firm, the president of the board, or company, or corporation, as your sort of super father, and you really look up to him with reverence and regard, you'd really give your life for him. So this is what many Japanese do. The firm becomes their group. Others join one or another of the new sects and the new religions. This is how deep the hunger to belong to a group goes.

Now I'm not saying that it's wrong to want to belong to a group, whether or not there's a group instinct. We might say that it's a natural human, or rather a natural animal need. But I'm only saying that the spiritual community is not a group. And since it's not a group, it should not be used as a substitute for a group.

Finally, the spiritual community is not a power structure. In other words, within the spiritual group, there's not authority in the ordinary sense of the term. In the group, in any group of any kind, there are some members, I won't say individuals, who are stronger, and others who are weaker, and the strong of course dominate the weak, and usually exploit the weak. The strong may be physically stronger, or they may be just more cunning, more clever, or they may be both. But in either case within any group, whether political or even religious or cultural, or tribal or familial, the stronger uses the weaker for its own, usually selfish, purposes. But in a spiritual community, there's nothing like this. There's no power, there's no authority. Within the spiritual community, some may be more experienced than others, some may be more developed than others, but they use this extra experience, this extra development, not so that they can lord it over the others, the less developed, the less experienced, or exploit them, but so that they can help them. So here again is another very important point of difference between the spiritual community and the group. Within the group, there is authority, the group is a power structure,

in one way or another, whether based on crude material power, or even on psychologically motivated coercion, but the spiritual community is not a power structure, and within it there is no authority whatsoever, in the coercive sense.

All right, third topic, the foundations of the spiritual community. From now onwards we have to be a little briefer. By the foundations of the spiritual community, we mean all those things which are essential to the very existence of the spiritual community. And the first requirement, the first essential, is very simple indeed and you've probably guessed it already - to have or to form a spiritual community there must be in the first place, a number of individuals. That's all that you need. You don't need a building, you don't need even a tradition, don't even need a religion, all you need is a number of individuals. That's the first requisite. If you haven't got that you might as well stop. You might as well not even try to have a spiritual community. You must start with individuals, a number of individuals. In other words a number of people relatively emancipated from the group; relatively integrated and aware; and these people should be trying to evolve, trying to develop; should be making a conscious effort to evolve, a conscious effort to develop. And of course, there should also be, this is another essential, another foundation as it were, there should also be among these people, among these individuals, regular personal contact. They should all be trying to evolve, yes, but also trying to evolve together. Not only that, not only trying to evolve together, but even helping one another to evolve, to develop. According to Buddhist tradition, the minimum number of people requisite to constitute a spiritual community is five. But one could probably manage with three. And one might even say that under special circumstances, and here we follow the Tantric tradition, even two people could be regarded as constituting between them a spiritual community.

Now in addition to all this, there must be for a spiritual community to be possible, to exist, there must be, so far as it's members are concerned, a common spiritual framework. That is to say there must be a framework within which all the members of any given spiritual community are trying to evolve, trying to develop. This framework constitutes incidentally, their medium of communication, and it consists mainly of two parts: this framework, this common framework within which they live, within which they try to evolve, within which they develop, consists mainly of two parts: in the first place there's the common spiritual ideal; all members of the spiritual community have a common spiritual ideal. They're all heading in the same direction. They're all aiming ultimately at the same realization, the same achievement, the higher stage of consciousness. And secondly, second part of the framework, they share a common means of realizing the ideal. They're following a common path or practise, a common teaching, a common method. They're walking the same way in the same way.

Now in terms of Buddhism, these two parts are known as the Buddha, representing the ideal at which one is aiming, and the Dharma, the Way, the Path which one is following, which one is treading. In other words, in terms of Buddhism, these two parts of the common framework are the first two Jewels, the Buddha, and the Dharma, and the community, the spiritual community itself of course is the Sangha, the third Jewel. Now the spiritual community need not be localized. All the members of the spiritual community don't have to live together under the same roof, but they do have to be in regular contact with one another. Even if they don't actually live together, even if they don't actually have the same roof over all their heads, they must be in regular contact, and by contact one means not just social contact, but real spiritual communication and exchange.

Now even though the spiritual community does not have to be localized one can probably say that in its early stages, it's best for a spiritual community to be localized, because this will ensure, at least encourage closer personal contact, and therefore greater mutual helpfulness between its different members. It will make for a more intensive evolutionary effort. This is not to say that localization does not have its own dangers. Of these, one will have to be constantly aware.

Now fourthly, joining the spiritual community. How one joins the spiritual community should be obvious from what has already been said. One can't join the spiritual community by paying a subscription; you can't even join it by kneeling in the snow outside closed monastery gates. You don't even necessarily join the spiritual community when you become a member of a Buddhist group. Joining the spiritual community is essentially a question of trying to be an individual, trying to evolve. This is what must come first; and then it consists in one's coming in contact with other individuals who are also trying to evolve, and trying to evolve together with them within

a common spiritual framework. This is what joining the spiritual community really means. On the more negative side, one joins the spiritual community by leaving the group. If one doesn't actually physically leave the group, in the literal sense, at least one ceases to identify oneself with the group; ceases to feel that one belongs to the group, in fact to any kind of group in the sense in which we have been using the term so far.

In the life, in the biography of the Buddha, his leaving the group is symbolized by the incident of his leaving home. And this is often related in the Buddhist text very dramatically and very beautifully: how it was a beautiful moonlit night, and how the Buddha decided to leave everything; and how he went into the inner apartment of the palace, and how he saw his young wife asleep, with their newly-born child lying by her side, and how he was tempted to wake them just for a last farewell, but then decided that perhaps it would be too painful for them, perhaps they would try to prevent his going, so he just looked at them standing in the doorway for a few moments, and then he left. So he left his wife, left his child, left his father, who was president of the tribe, left his foster mother, left his friends. And he became for a number of years, a homeless wanderer; a homeless mendicant; became what was known in those days as a parivrajaka, which means 'one who has gone forth'. 'Gone forth' that is to say, from the household state into a state of homelessness, or if you like, grouplessness. And in the Buddha's day, this was a not uncommon practise, this practise of going forth. There were many people, many men, even a few women, wandering about, as parivrajakas, rootless, homeless, groupless, all over northern India. And they used to subsist on alms. They'd go early in the morning from door to door with a little bowl, and they'd collect whatever food people cared to give them, and these ancient parivrajakas, those who have gone forth, are of course the spiritual ancestors of the modern Indian Sadhus, whom one can still see going from village to village on foot, sitting on the steps of temples, and sitting at the foot of great spreading Banyan trees.

And after the Buddha's enlightenment, when after six years of struggle, six years of search, he found the truth, realized absolute consciousness, when he started to preach, when he started to reveal, when he started to make known what he'd discovered, most of his disciples, certainly most of his closer disciples, were recruited from this class, from the parivrajaka class, the classless class, as one might describe it. In most cases they wandered about for quite a long time, years, maybe many years, and they came in contact with the Buddha, they accepted his teaching, and then he accepted them. Or other disciples on his behalf accepted them into the spiritual community, into the Sangha. So in this way, one can see that there were two phases, or two stages, a phase or a stage of going forth from home, giving up the group, and just wandering without belonging to any group, without being identified with any particular collection of people. And then, joining the spiritual community, being accepted into the Buddha's spiritual community. And these two we may say, the leaving of home, the giving up the group, and the acceptance into the spiritual community, the Sangha, these we can say are the negative and positive aspects of one and the same process. And this whole distinction, these two phases, these two stages are reflected even today in the Buddhist ordination procedure. When you're ordained as a monk in Buddhism, or as what in the West we call a monk though that isn't really the correct term, there are two ordinations; there's what is usually known as the lower ordination; and there's what is known as the higher ordination. The lower ordination is called 'Pabbajja' - 'going forth', and the higher ordination is called Upasampada. The one symbolizes or represents the going forth from home, the going forth from the group, leaving the group, giving up the group, the natural group, the biological group, and so on, the conditioned group; leaving all that behind, emancipating oneself from all that; giving up family ties, social ties, group loyalties, political connections of every kind. Breaking free, as it were, cutting off, being on one's own, just an individual, isolated. And then, Upasampada, the higher ordination, that represents the acceptance of that individual who has been as it were tried and tested in the fires of loneliness; his acceptance into the spiritual community of individuals, not his taking refuge in a snug little religious group, but his being accepted as an individual by other individuals, and becoming a member, a responsible member of their spiritual community. So much then for joining the spiritual community.

And fifthly, is the spiritual community necessary? That is to say, is it necessary to the Higher Evolution of the Individual? We can answer this question perhaps by referring back to the first of the six aphorisms with which we concluded last week's lecture: and this aphorism read as follows: personal relationships are necessary for human development. And this applies at all levels: cultural, psychological, spiritual. The vast majority of people undoubtedly develop best,

most rapidly, even most easily, in the company of other people, or at least in contact with other people. Very few people indeed are able to develop entirely on their own. It's not that there are no such people - in Buddhism, such people are known as Pratyeka-Buddhas - private or solitary Buddhas, privately or solitarily enlightened ones, but though there are a number of incidents and anecdotes recorded about them, it is significant that all these solitary Buddhas are located in the remote legendary past. There appear to be no historical examples.

Now the spiritual community is necessary in the sense that when one is trying to evolve, when one is trying really to develop, one can be, one is, greatly stimulated by contact with others who are trying to evolve too. We all know that if we meet someone who is interested in something that we are interested in, we find this very very stimulating. If we're on our own all the time, if we've no-one to talk with about our special interest, no-one with whom to share our thoughts, it's very much more difficult. But if we have that sort of contact, that sort of exchange, even that sort of communication, then it all becomes much more easy, at least we see things much more clearly. Even though it's still we ourselves who have to make the effort.

Now all this does not mean or does not necessarily mean that one has to stay in a localized spiritual community. This might be even more helpful, might well be even more helpful than just the general contact with other like-minded individuals, or even membership of the spiritual community. And it certainly doesn't mean that one needs to be with other people all the time; not even other evolving people, not even other members of the spiritual community. Even after one has contacted the spiritual community, become perhaps a member of the spiritual community, it's good to be on one's own sometimes. But nevertheless in spite of this fact we can say that hardly anybody really evolves, without prolonged contact, contact over a considerable period, with other evolving, or evolved, beings. In other words, without being members of the spiritual community. It is for this reason that the spiritual community is necessary.

Now sixthly and lastly, dangers facing the spiritual community. So far as I can see, there's only one real danger facing the spiritual community, and all the other dangers are contained in that. That is the danger of the spiritual community becoming a group, or a substitute for a group, or rather of being replaced by a group. The spiritual community as such can't become a group, but the spiritual community can wither away or disappear and be replaced by a group, which has perhaps the same name and the same external appearance. It's all rather analogous to what happens on a much grander scale in the case of a universal religion, when it's transformed into an ethnic religion. When it ceases to cater to the spiritual needs of the individual, as all universal religions by their very nature profess to cater, and start providing for the collective needs of the group e.g. blessing armies, and ensuring fertility, and things like that. And this happens: a universal religion becomes transformed into an ethnic religion, as we saw in some detail in a lecture last winter, and also the spiritual community becomes transformed into a mere group, owing to the operation of what I call 'the gravitational pull'. No time to explain that now, it's been explained at length in other lectures.

And one might say that the localized spiritual community, that is to say the spiritual community consisting of people living together under one roof, is particularly exposed to this danger, is especially exposed to the gravitational pull. We find that the inmates perhaps just start making themselves more and more comfortable. They forget all about spiritual development. Maybe they're much more concerned with their kitchen, than with their meditation room or their shrine. And so on. So this is the danger that is there all the time, especially in the case of the localized spiritual community. So it therefore becomes necessary to remind oneself never to forget that the Higher Evolution requires constant effort. One can't afford to let up, at least not until one reaches to point of what is called 'Stream Entry' or the point of no return. If you stop making an effort, you will inevitably slip back. You can't stand still, you can't rest on your laurels. You can't ever feel, 'well that's enough for this life, I'm just going to stop here and wait for the next life to come along, and then carry on from that point'. This is just not possible. The minute you stop making the effort prior to the attainment of Stream Entry, back you start slipping.

Now I want to conclude this lecture which I suspect has run a little over time, I want to conclude it by saying just a few words about the movement under whose auspices this series of lectures is being held. That is to say a few words about what we call the Friends of the Western Buddhist Order, founded some three years ago. In traditional terms, this is a Buddhist movement. Some

people call it a Buddhist group, but I'm deliberately using the expression 'Buddhist movement' in the hope that we do move; not only move spiritually, but move very shortly from our old premises to new ones. But that, the fact that we are a Buddhist movement, is far from being the real heart of the matter.

Essentially we may say we are a fellowship of people who are trying to evolve, trying to develop. This does not mean by any means that we claim that everybody who is in any way connected with us is automatically evolving. This is certainly not the case, or even that they're all trying to evolve, but I think one can make the modest claim that there are at least a few who are trying to evolve, and that these few are in regular contact, or more or less regular contact with one another, that they're trying to evolve together. And they therefore constitute so far as our movement is concerned, the spiritual community within it, and they constitute also the heart of the movement. And all the activities therefore of the movement, of the FWBO, have one purpose, and only one purpose, and that is to help people grow, or help people develop, or at least provide them with facilities for developing, and growing. It isn't our aim to try to build up a group or an organization in the ordinary sense. One of our friends a few years ago was rather disappointed with us because we didn't seem to be developing into the sort of sect that you find in modern Japan. That we had no banners, and that we were not marching through the streets of London, and taking over the Albert Hall. He was very disappointed and eventually he left us. But this is not the sort of thing that we're trying to do. We're not trying to build up a group of this sort, or an organization of this sort. And we shall be quite content, even if we have relatively few people, provided these few people are in close personal contact, are evolving together, and provided that we have in this way both individuals and the spiritual community.