Lecture 93: The Buddha's Philosophy of Personal Relations

Friends,

Yesterday, as you may remember, we considered the Buddha's philosophy of Right Speech and we studied the Buddhist philosophy of Right Speech in relation to a verse from one of the most famous Buddhist texts, an anthology of verses selected from the scriptures, called the Dhammapada. This Dhammapada, as I explained, was the first Buddhist text to be translated into a European language, in this case Latin, from the original Pali. Now this evening we are going to take up an allied subject, we're going to take up for consideration what we may call the Buddha's philosophy of personal relations, and to illustrate the Buddha's philosophy of personal relations we're going to extract another verse from the Dhammapada and base our explanation, base our exposition, on that. You may remember that our verse yesterday came from the chapter of the thousands, the Sarvagasa, and our verse this evening comes from another chapter called the Pupavaga, which means the chapter of flowers, because each verse mentions, either by way of illustration, or in some other way, a flower of some kind or another, or just flowers in general.

Our verse this evening - the translation incidentally is that of Buddhadata, but later on I shall make one or two emendations our verse this evening reads as follows:

> *'As the bee takes honey from the flower, leaving its colour and fragrance unharmed, so let the monk go about the village.'*

Let me read that again so that it really sinks in.

> *'As the bee takes honey from the flower, leaving its colour and fragrance unharmed, so let the monk go about the village.'*

Now, we find in the Buddhist scriptures, including the Dhammapada, a number of very beautiful illustrations, metaphors, similes, parables and these are very often drawn from some aspect or another of Indian life: social life, family life, nature and so on. And so it is we find with this verse. This verse conjures up, we may say, a picture very familiar to anyone who has lived very long either in India or in South East Asia, whether Ceylon, or Burma, Thailand, and so on. And the picture is of the monk going for alms in the village. I know I have myself seen this sight many and many a time, and in fact in my own wandering days when I was walking about India, going around on foot from place to place, I had myself this sort of experience which is described here. But I'm going to try and describe it this evening as it were objectively, as though I was seeing, as though I was watching somebody. You usually find in the East, whether it's India, or whether it's Ceylon or Burma, the monks go out for alms very very early in the morning. In India there's no such thing traditionally as lunch, there's no such thing as the midday meal. People usually eat at about 9 or 9.30. They have what we would call lunch. It's a very very big meal, consisting mainly of rice, and then, in the villages at least, they go off to work in the fields and they don't come back until 5 or 6 in the evening when they eat again. So if the monk wants to fill his bowl or his bag, he has to go out very very early in the morning. So usually not long after dawn you see the monk leaving the monastery and moving very very quietly, very silently along the streets, which might be still deserted, and just going from house to house. The Buddhist custom at least is that when the monk goes to a house for alms he just stands at the door with his begging bowl. He's not supposed to say anything and he's not supposed to ask for anything. He's supposed, in the course of his alms collection tour, as it's called, he's supposed `to remain all the time completely silent. So he just stands at the door and people are usually on the look out for monks coming in this way, so it may be that a little child runs inside and says 'Oh Mummy, the monk is standing outside.' So the mother says, 'all right, ask him to wait,' and she quickly gets together a few spoonfuls of rice, a few spoonfuls of curry, and then goes and puts them in the monk's bowl, and the monk then usually recites a little verse of blessing in Pali, and then he moves on to the next hut, stands again at the door in the same way. And in this way he goes from door to door, from hut to hut, until he has collected enough food, by the way his one meal if he eats only once a day, or for the whole day, enough to last him for the whole day if he intends eating more than once.

So this is the traditional system. One doesn't take the whole meal from any one house; one takes a little from this house and a little from that, and in India even today Hindu Sadhus follow this custom, and it is called matu curri biksha, which means collecting alms just like the bee collects honey. Just as the bee takes a little pollen from this flower and a little pollen from that to make its honey, in the same way the monk takes a little food from one house, a little food from another, and so on, until he has enough. So this is the

traditional system. Just as the bee takes what he needs, or what it needs, from the flower, namely the pollen, the honey, in the same way the monk takes, or doesn't even take, accepts whatever he needs to sustain life as he moves from hut to hut, from door to door, and this, as I say, is the traditional system. It's still observed in many parts of the Buddhist world, and certainly observed in India by Hindu Sadhus and sometimes by Buddhist monks as well.

Now traditionally, according to the Buddhist custom, the monk, the bhikshu, is entitled to expect from the lay supporters four things: these are called the four requisites. First of all, of course, there is food. You can't get along without that. Secondly clothing, especially in the form of the saffron robe. Thirdly shelter, either in the form of a temporary hut, or a monastery, or some such arrangement, and fourthly and lastly medicine. When the monk is ordained he is told that these are the four basic things, these are the four essentials and these you have a right to expect and accept from the lay people, but not anything more than this. These are called the four essentials or the four requisites. In other words the idea is, or the principle is, that the monk or the one devoted to the religious life should accept from others, from the lay supporters or the lay devotees, only what is necessary to keep him going so that he can practise his meditations, so that he can teach, and so that he can progress in the direction of enlightenment. So this is the tradition and this is the custom: that the monk accepts from the laity only these four essential things, and accepts them, collects them if you like. So it's like the bee collects pollen to be made into honey from the flowers, just these four things: food, clothing, shelter, and medicine. In modern times of course, I must tell you, a few things have been added, and this is inevitable after 2500 years of Buddhist history. You start off with four things, but it's inevitable, as I say, that a few things should have been added, and the most important thing which has been added in modern times has been books, and these, it is taken for granted, the monk also regards as a sort of fundamental requisite.

But in many parts of the Buddhist world the monk still does lead a very very simple life. In many parts of the Buddhist world you find monks taking one, or at the most two meals a day, living in very simple cottages or even huts, find them just making do with the minimum of clothing, which of course is very easy in a tropical country, and very simple medicines. Traditionally - this is just a point of interest - the monk is supposed to make use of medicine made out of gall-nuts and cow's urine, which is, you may think, a little bizarre, but there is some scientific sense. in it because you can make a sort of ammonia out of cow's urine and this is very good for a number of different medical purposes.

I do remember once when I was staying in Benares about twenty years ago, I happened to fall sick, and one of my correspondents, a monk, a very orthodox Buddhist monk in Ceylon, he wrote to me a very vigorous letter in which he said if you take cow's urine you'll never be sick again in your life! But I didn't take cow's urine; I recovered, and I have been able to keep fairly healthy ever since.

So this is the traditional position, the traditional custom, that the monk accepts from the lay supporters only the basic requisites of life, only those things which suffice to keep him going so that he can get on with his work, preach and teach, meditate, write if he wants to, and so on.

Now, the question which people very often ask, especially in the West, is, well, this is very good, this is a beautiful arrangement from the point of view of the monk: he gets his food, he gets his clothing, he gets his shelter, maybe a beautiful monastery, he gets medicine when he is sick, everything is provided for him so that he can quietly get on either with his studies or with meditations or his literary work or his preaching, but the question which people like to put is, 'What does he do in return? He gets all this, but what does he give? What does he give in return? What does he do in return?'

Now the traditional answer to this is that the monk does not do anything in return, absolutely nothing at all. this is the first thing to be understood. He gets all this, he gets food, clothing, he gets accommodation, he gets medicine, he gets books, whatever else may be necessary, but he does absolutely nothing in return, and nobody expects anything in return, and he doesn't have the idea that he should give anything in return. Now this requires a bit of pondering.

Some time ago, a couple of years ago in fact I think, at Brighton, at a Buddhist meeting, I was asked a question. One of the lay members, one of the lay supporters asked, or rather said, 'We have been told,' she said, 'that whatever we give by way of contribution to the movement to the monks is for the support of the Sangha, not payment for teaching. Is this correct?' This is the question which she put, and we may say in reply to that question which she put and which other people also put, that, yes, it is quite correct, that whatever is given is given for the support of the Sangha, not payment for teaching. This is the correct

position. In other words nothing is given in return, just as the monk when he receives the material requisites gives nothing in return. So the lay people, in the same way, when they receive the teaching give nothing in return. The emphasis is on not giving anything in return. We shall come to this a little more later on.

The monk takes what he needs, and he gives what he can, but there's no relationship between the two, not that you receive so much therefore you must give so much, or that you give so much so you must receive so much, an equivalent quantity as it were. No, there's no relationship between the two, no quantitative relationship, no relationship of reciprocity between the two, so that you give because you get or you get because you give and so on. It isn't like that at all. You take what you need. You give what you can. You don't think of translating what you give into so many equivalent units of what you ought to receive. You keep the two things quite clear. When you can give you give, when you need you take. There's no question of a bargain, no question of anything being given or taken in return.

So this is the general principle, and it should hold good in all the relationships of life. It should be possible for us in all the relationships of life to take what we need, whether food, or clothing, or education, or anything else, and give just what we can. There shouldn't be any sort of connection between them. But unfortunately this ideal state of affairs is very far from being the case. What usually happens is that each person, whether the giver or receiver, thinks of himself or herself, and very often tries to give as little as possible in exchange for as much as possible. This seems to be the general principle of ordinary life, so a sort of bargain is usually struck. People say in all walks of life, in all spheres of activity, if you give me that, then I shall give you this in return. The two are sort of linked, or hooked together in this way. However, for the moment we are not concerned so much with this aspect. Let us go back just for a few minutes to our verse, to the bee and the flower.

Now, the bee takes what it needs from the flower. It takes honey, or takes what it ultimately makes into honey, and in the same way, according to this verse, the monk takes what he needs, in other words food, clothing, and so on, and the point that the verse makes, the point that the verse in fact stresses, is that neither do any harm. The bee - I don't know whether this is correct from the point of view of nature study - the bee, according to the verse, takes the honey from the flower without injuring the colour, and without injuring the fragrance, and in the same way the monk takes or collects his food from or within the village without doing any harm. In other words, in the case of the bee, and also in the case of the monk, there is no exploitation. There's a quiet and gentle taking, we may even say acceptance, but there's no injury done, there's no exploitation. But this is not what we usually find in the ordinary affairs of life. Usually we make up our minds we want something, we're going to get something, and we usually try to get it or take it without regard to the consequences which our taking may have for those from whom we take. As in the case of people in business who make excess profit, they just don't bother about the plight of the people from whom they take those profits. A few days ago I was talking to someone about India and I mentioned the case which I have seen myself so often of very wealthy merchants, dealers in grains, especially rice, deliberately hoarding food grains and stowing them away, and pretending not to have anything in stock so as to force the prices up. And sometimes this would go on for weeks and weeks in remote parts of the country, even in big cities. People may have nothing to eat, they may be starving, they may even be dying of starvation, but the merchants will hold on to those stocks as long as they possibly can until the price has gone up so far it can't go up any further. Then they start slowly releasing the stocks, and selling the grain at a very very high price on the black market usually to the starving people, who have to scrape together their rupees and annas and pies (?) so as to buy the bare minimum necessary for their subsistence. This is the sort of thing which very often is done, perhaps not so crudely as this, perhaps in more subtle forms, but very often done in all walks of life, that we try to take from others, to get from others without regard to the consequences for those whom we are exploiting in this way. So this, therefore, is the real point of this verse, that the monk should take, should live without exploiting others. He should take only what he needs for his livelihood without doing any harm to the people on whom he is dependent for his livelihood.

I mentioned a little while ago that we might find it necessary to make one or two changes in Buddhadata's translation of this verse. Now, the word which he translates as monk is not really monk in the original at all. I mentioned before that some English translations of some Pali words are very very misleading, and this word monk is one of them, because really in Buddhism there's nothing resembling the western conception of a monk at all, and the word in the original text here which translates as monk is 'muni.' 'Muni' can mean monk in a way, can mean bhikshu in a way, but not necessarily. A muni really, essentially, is a wise man, or a holy man, and therefore very often the word muni is translated as sage. For

instance, one of the titles of the Buddha is the Sakyamuni, the muni, the wise man, the sage of the Sakya tribe, or the Sakya clan. Muni also means one who observes a vow of silence. We're probably going to have a little silence later on in the retreat, so perhaps it's appropriate that we mention this now. So muni is also one who observes a vow of silence. In Sanskrit and in Pali as in the modern northern Indian languages, mana is silence, so a muni is one who is silent, and it is rather interesting that there is this sort of association of ideas in the original, which is full of suggestiveness. It suggests that the wise man is the silent man, or that the silent man is the wise man. The wise man doesn't talk too much. And in some translations they render the word muni as the silent sage so as to bring out the double meaning of the word, one who is wise, and one who is silent, whether wise because he is silent or silent because he is wise or both it may be difficult to say.

It is incidentally rather interesting that this word muni is used in this particular verse, because it goes to show that the verse is very very ancient. You probably know that some parts of the Buddhist scriptures are more ancient than others, and some scholars are of the opinion that the word muni was the first word to be used in Buddhism for the ideal man, the emancipated or enlightened being. According to some scholars the first word by which the ideal man, the perfected man, was known in Buddhism was this word muni, the sage, the silent one, or the silent sage. This term according to some scholars was in use before the term Arahant. In standard Buddhism, in basic Buddhism, the general term for the disciple of the Buddha who is enlightened, who has gained nirvana, gained emancipation, is Arahant, the worthy one, but apparently in the earliest texts of all, such as this verse and some of the passages of the Sutta Nipata, the emancipated person, the ideal, the perfected man of Buddhism is called the muni, the silent one, the sage, or the silent sage.

Now, this is just as it were by the way, but if we look at the original text and bear in mind this other meaning of the word muni, that it isn't just monk, it's the sage, or the silent sage, we can translate the verse in a different, and probably better way. Instead of translating 'so let the monk move about the village' we can also translate, 'so let the wise man live in the world.' In this way we get a much broader, and a more universal meaning. Let's go back to the whole verse and read it again in this light:

> *'As the bee takes honey from the flower, leaving its colour and fragrance unharmed, so let the wise man live in the world.'*

This gives a much better, and much fuller meaning, not restricted to the monks, or those who are technically monks, but applicable to everybody who lives in the world.

So if we translate in this way, if we translate 'so let the wise man live in the world' this gives us a very important principle bearing in mind the whole verse. it gives us the principle, the fundamental principle, one of the basic things in the ethical and spiritual life, that the wise man does not exploit. This may seem very simple, it may seem very easy, certainly it's easy to understand, but if thoroughly, systematically applied then the effect would be far reaching. The wise man does not exploit. The wise man takes from society, from others, what he objectively needs, what is necessary to sustain life, what is necessary to enable him to work, what is necessary to progress spiritually. He takes from his surroundings, from his environment, from other people, from society, what he objectively needs, but he does no harm, and he gives what he can.

Now, this idea of non-exploitation, living in the world without harming, without exploiting, giving what you can, taking what you need, this idea of non-exploitation occurs very very frequently in Buddhist teaching. Most of you know that in Buddhism we've got lots of lists, lists of terms, and rules, and practices, and doctrines, and one of the best known lists is the list of the five precepts, the five ethical undertakings or obligations which we recite in Pali whenever we do our seven-fold puja. Now, the second precept is the precept or the obligation of not taking what is not given, not taking what is not given. In some ethical codes you get the form 'not stealing', but for Buddhism that isn't enough. It leaves, as it were, too many loop-holes. You can be a perfectly honest person, and never steal in your life, but you can build up your business in all sorts of irregular ways which are just about in the letter of the law you could never be had up for theft - but you are doing all sorts of things which are a bit shady, not quite straight, or which are ethically doubtful, and in this way amassing wealth. So the Buddhist precept therefore says, 'not taking that which is not given.' You've no right to take something unless those to whom it at present belongs, or who are its present owners, whether individuals, or society as a whole, or the community as a whole, unless they willingly and readily give it to you, allow you to take it. If it's not given, you have no right to take. The giving and the taking should be two aspects of the same action as it were. Just not stealing is not

enough.

This is why in some Buddhist countries the monk is supposed to practise this very very strictly, to such an extent that on formal occasions when food is offered to the monks, they are not allowed to take it, not allowed to eat it unless the plate containing the food is lifted up and actually put in their hands, and this is just to underline the fact that one should not take what is not actually given. So, just as it is with taking from the individual, so also is it with regard to taking from the community, from the world at large, one should only take that which is actually given.

So this is all made clear in the second precept, that it isn't enough not to steal. One shouldn't take what is not given, shouldn't exploit, shouldn't take by force or by fraud in any way. Now, the same sort of principle finds application in what Buddhism calls right or perfect livelihood, which is the fifth step of the Noble Eightfold Path. You've all, I'm sure, heard of the Buddha's Noble Eightfold Path of perfect vision, perfect emotion, perfect speech, perfect action, perfect means of livelihood, perfect effort, perfect awareness, and perfect samadhi. So this right or perfect livelihood, or means of livelihood, is the fifth step of that path. So you see that the Buddha has made this right or perfect livelihood an integral part of the spiritual life, an integral part of his spiritual teaching. You can't just meditate and study the scriptures, and then earn your living in any old way. This isn't good enough. We all, of course, have to earn a living, those who are not monks - this is recognised - we have to make both ends meet in some way or other, but we should do this only in such a way that no harm is done to others, and no harm also done to oneself. And just as a sort of rough and ready guide to right livelihood or perfect livelihood Buddhism lists a whole series of occupations which are normally prohibited for Buddhists, for those following the spiritual path or trying to lead a spiritual life. First of all there should be no trading in living beings. This is the very first thing as regards right livelihood, no trading in living beings, whether human beings or animals. This, of course, abolishes things like the slave trade, which Buddhism in this way abolished, we may say, 2500 years ago with this requirement, whereas in Europe it wasn't abolished until comparatively recently, not in this country until the 18th century, and not in America until the 19th century. But in the Buddhist countries of Asia it was abolished all those centuries ago, because no trading in living beings. Not only no trading in human beings, no slavery, but no trading in animals for purposes of slaughter. That's why even today in Buddhist countries no Buddhist will be a butcher or a slaughterman or anything else of that sort. This is harmful we may say in very many different ways. I remember some years ago reading an account by an Australian Buddhist monk of visits he had made and enquiries he had conducted in slaughter houses in Australia, and what he had to say was very interesting. He said that he had discovered that usually a person who worked, a man who worked in a slaughter house, slaughtering sheep and cows and pigs all day long by one means or another, couldn't keep it up, couldn't continue this work for more than two years. At the end of two years they had to leave, and usually those who left at the end of the full two-year period were mentally very seriously disturbed, even to the extent of being temporarily insane as a result of this occupation of theirs, in other words as a result of stifling their own natural feelings of compassion for other living beings. And slaughtering, taking life and being surrounded by this sort of thing constantly, they'd seriously disturbed their own mental balance, in some cases, so he wrote, even irreparably. So this should surely give us a very serious matter for consideration.

Then again in early Buddhism trade in poisons was prohibited, not of course poisons used for medical purposes, but poisons used to take human life. In the old days in India, apparently, if you wanted to get someone out of the way, you could go to a dealer in poisons and buy a little phial of something or other, and put it in his rice and curry. So this sort of means of livelihood, selling poisons for this purpose, this is wrong livelihood according to Buddhism and a Buddhist shouldn't indulge in it. We might even say that in modern times this applies to the manufacture and sale of cigarettes. I think it has been fairly well established that tobacco is poisonous, at least to some extent, so it could be argued that those who were cultivating tobacco, those who manufactured cigarettes, those who sold them, and even those who had shares in various firms having to do with the manufacture of cigarettes or production of tobacco were dealing in poison to some extent. So this matter also requires our serious consideration.

Then again, early Buddhism prohibited the occupation or the trade of manufacturing and selling weapons of war, armaments. In those days, in the Buddha's day, it was only a matter of bows and arrows, of spears and swords, maybe some stout sticks, not much more than that. But as we know, since those early primitive days we have progressed considerably, we're nowadays much more cultured, much more civilised, much more advanced than we were, so now we have all sorts of other weapons right up to the atom bomb and the hydrogen bomb. But we can say that the Buddha's principle of right livelihood, of not earning a living by manufacturing death-dealing weapons, which may be used to destroy not just a few

lives, but even hundreds and millions of lives, this would certainly come under the heading of wrong means of livelihood.

Now, all these sorts of provisions and prohibitions in Buddhism, these are meant for the laity, the lay followers, that, yes, one has to earn, one has to work, one has to make money, but not in these ways, not in ways that offend against the principle of right livelihood, so no trading in living beings, no work as a butcher and so on, no trafficking poisons, no trafficking arms and weapons of death. But there are also various means of earning a living which are prohibited for the monk, certain ways of obtaining support from the laity which he's not supposed to indulge in, and these comprise of various kinds of fortune-telling. In the days of the Buddha in India, as even in the present, people are very very fond of fortune-telling, very very attracted by this sort of

thing, and in India nowadays, and even unfortunately in some Buddhist countries many many Sadhus and monks do make a living in this particular way. But the Buddha has prohibited this, especially in the Digha Nikaya, in the various silakandas, there are many dozens, even scores, of ways of telling fortunes and predicting the future for people's benefit enumerated, and all are prohibited. The Buddha says that the monk must not support the laity in this particular way. But unfortunately all over the Buddhist world today, whether it's Ceylon, or whether it's Tibet, or whether it's Thailand, you do find monks indulging in these various things.

Another thing which the monk is not supposed to do to enlist the support of the laity is to promise them the development of psychic powers. Some people are very interested in these things, and if you sort of dangle the carrot of psychic powers in front of their nose, you can lead them almost anywhere. I remember in this connection someone came to see me and stay with me in Kalimpong some years ago. He was an Englishman and he arrived on my doorstep one evening in the midst of the rainy season. I'm quite accustomed there to unexpected visitors so I invited him in, and I asked him, 'What has brought you to Kalimpong?' So he said, 'I want to develop some psychic powers.' So I said - I'd heard this sort of thing before - 'what sort of psychic powers do you want to develop?' He said, 'I want to be able to read other people's thoughts, and I want to be able to see the future.' He was quite straight forward about it, quite sure what he wanted. So then I put the question, 'Why do you want to develop these powers, reading other people's thoughts (as if one's own were not enough), seeing into the future, predicting the future?' He said, 'It will help me in my work.' Now, what that work was transpired later on, but it was interesting that he was a disciple or had been a disciple of Lobsang Rampa. You've all heard of Lobsang Rampa and the third eye and all this sort of thing, and this man was also very seriously searching for a Tibetan lama who could perform this third eye operation upon him, and open his third eye by drilling a little hole there, and in this way endowing him with this supernormal sort of clairvoyant vision. This is the sort of thing that one does come up against, and if he had met, if this person had met any unscrupulous teacher who was ready to cater to his desire for developing psychic power, well this man would have done practically anything. In fact he said to me, 'If anyone can teach me these things I'm quite prepared to place at their disposal a very large sum of money.' And quite a lot of people subsequently, before he died he came to rather an untimely end, I'm afraid - several people before he died got quite a lot of money out of him in one way or another on account of his craving for psychic powers. So this is one of the means of livelihood, so far as the monk is concerned, which the Buddha prohibits, not enlisting the support of people by pandering to their craving for supernormal or supernatural powers of various kinds. In the East of course this sort of thing is very common. We might think it's not so common here in this country, but if one looks around in certain circles, spiritualists and occultists, you find people are very very fascinated by things of this sort. The idea of power, the idea of powers which other people don't possess, mysterious and occult and wonderful powers, attracts and fascinates some people very very much, so that, as I said, if you dangle this sort of carrot in front of their noses you can lead them, whether in the right direction or the wrong direction, very far indeed.

Now, all this is in a sense by the way, but it does illustrate this general principle of non-exploitation, that one shouldn't use people or pander to people in this way, but we may say that one of the commonest fields of exploitation in the whole range of human life is the economic.

We find in the economic sphere employers exploit employees if they can, and vice versa, the employees exploit the employers. We tend to think that this is a rather modern sort of problem, relationships between capital and labour, employer and employee, between office and factory, and so on. But it's interesting that the Buddha himself has given considerable attention to this matter. There's a very very famous Sutta or discourse of the Buddha in the Digha Nikaya. This particular Sutta is called the Sigalovada Sutta. Sigala

is a young Brahmin of the Buddha's day, and ovada means advice, so it's the Sutta of the Buddha's advice to the young Brahmin, Sigala. And in this particular Sutta the Buddha has laid down a sort of pattern of relationships for different kinds of persons. He has explained what should be the relationship, for instance, between father and son, what should be the relationship between friend and friend, what should be the relationship between husband and wife, and also he has explained in some detail what should be the relationship between employer and employee. All this is set forth with great clarity and succinctness and it is of considerable interest to us today. The Buddha says there are five duties of the employer towards the employee, and five duties of the employee towards the employer. This gives us a sort of business code of economic ethics, we may say, of capital and labour relationships. First of all the five duties of the employer. The Buddha says the employer must give the employee work according to his bodily and mental strength, give him the sort of work he can do without injury to himself. I'm sorry to say that this principle is not observed in India today. Though the Buddha gave this instruction twenty five centuries ago, it is not observed in India today. You can see in India today, unfortunately, hundreds of thousands of people who earn their living as koohlis. A koohli means just an ordinary labourer who carries a great load on his back, or rather on his head, from place to place, and these people are the poorest of the poor and the lowest of the low, as anybody who has been to India will know. They usually manage to earn about two rupees a day, which is about half a crown a day, and on that they have to live and support themselves and their families. But what you very often see is that a well-to-do merchant, say, will hire a number of koohlis, say, to carry bags, carry sacks of rice. Now, he may get a very thin weak old koohli, who can just about stagger along with a small bag, but if the employer, if the merchant allows him just to carry a small bag that will mean that he will take double the time to do the job. Instead of the job, say, lasting one day, it will last two days, and he will have to give the man two days' wages. So he loads him double. So you see the wretched koohli staggering along under a load which he has no business to be carrying at all. You see the veins standing out, you see the muscles absolutely stretched like whipcord, and the perspiration streaming down, and this can be a very very pitiable sight. This is the sort of thing which one sees every day in India, that the koohli and the ordinary workman is given work to do, loads to carry, far in excess of his strength. It's the same with the rickshaw pullers - they're trying to do away with them now - but formerly the life of the rickshaw puller wasn't more than a few years. They started pulling rickshaws when they were fifteen or sixteen; by the time they were twenty five they were finished. They usually had TB, and you see them spitting blood, and that would be the end of them within a few months, because at the same time that they were doing this work they had a minimum sort of diet, no proper nutrition, so the work quite literally killed them. But no one bothered. I remember the first time I was in Ceylon, and I took a ride in a rickshaw, rather against my will. I was quite horrified and I kept telling the koohli to go slower, because it seemed so terrible that he should be pulling me along at top speed, obviously at great injury to himself. But he didn't understand what I was saying, and he thought I was telling him, as anyone else would have done, to go faster. So the more I said go slower the more he went faster. So in the end I had to stop. But thereafter I used a rickshaw only when I absolutely had to in some sort of emergency, trying usually to pick someone fairly strong and sturdy, and not make him go very very quickly. You can't stop using them altogether, because they've got no means of livelihood apart from pulling the rickshaw.

So this is the sort of thing that's done, even now, in India, probably hardly at all in western countries. But this is the sort of thing that happens in the East very very much, that people are given work, given labour, far in excess of their strength, so that they are quite literally, in the long run, killed by it. So, it's very significant that the Buddha so many centuries ago laid down this precept, that the employer should give the employee work according to his bodily and mental strength.

Secondly, the Buddha said the employer should give the employee food and sufficient pay. This is still the custom in India. If you employ someone you give them food, you give them clothes, plus some cash. It's not usually a salary. So here the operative principle is give food and sufficient pay, that is sufficient to meet the needs, sufficient to enable the employee to live decently as a human being, not sufficient in relation to the work done. There shouldn't be any correlation, as I said earlier, between the amount of work done and the amount of pay received. We've got accustomed to thinking in these terms: so much work done, therefore so much pay received, but it shouldn't really be like this at all. The employee should work as faithfully as he can, and the employer should give him simply what he needs for a good and decent human life, not a minimum, not just a bare subsistence, not what he needs in that sense, but what he needs for a full and adequate and decent human life. I read in a paper recently that the suggestion had been made that on the attainment of majority every man and woman in this country should be given by the state a sort of basic stipend just enough for food, clothing, and shelter, regardless of whether they worked or not. This seemed to me quite an excellent idea, and the idea was further that anyone who wanted more than this, who wanted to buy a car, or a radio, or a television set, they should have to work. You should have to work

only for luxuries, but the necessities of life were provided to everybody free. I'm quite sure that we could work out some sort of system of this kind. If you wanted to study, or meditate, well you could. You draw your -3 or -5 a week from the state and make do with that, but if you wanted more you'd have to work. There'd probably be quite a number of people who would want more, who would in fact love to work, but no doubt quite a number also, especially Buddhists, who'd be quite content, I hope, to live very very simply, without a radio, without a television set, without all those other wonderful things, but without having to work, devoting themselves entirely to Buddhism, like a sort of vast secular Sangha or monastic order of one kind or another. Anyway, the basic principle here is that the employee should get what he needs, quite apart from the actual amount of work done. Even if he's very weak and can do very little work, he should still get what he needs fully, and even if he's very strong and healthy, and his output, his turnover, is enormous, he shouldn't get extra, he should just get what he needs by way of remuneration.

Thirdly, the Buddha says the employer should give the employee medical treatment and support after retirement. Now look at this principle. 2500 years ago this was enunciated: that the employer should continue to look after the employee, even when he was no longer working, either due to age or to sickness, should continue to support him, continue to pay him, and continue to allow for his medical treatment. You could hardly have anything better than that, even in the welfare state.

Fourthly, the Buddha says, the employer should share with the employee any extras. In other words if the employer that year makes an extra profit, share it with the employee, let him participate in it. It shouldn't be kept only for the employer. In other words the principle of bonus.

Fifthly, and lastly, it is the duty, the Buddha said, of the employer to grant the employee holidays and special allowances. It has a very modern ring, doesn't it? holidays and special allowances.

So these are the five rules, five precepts, laid down by the Buddha for the guidance of the employer in relationship to the employee. But the employee also has certain duties. It isn't one-sided. There are five duties for the employee also.

And the first one is very significant. He should be punctual. I don't know why the Buddha put this first. In India everyone is unpunctual. Even the trains aren't punctual. Sometimes they're two or three hours late. People never come punctually. They say, as anyone who has been in India will know, and I can see Miss Castle is smiling, they say I'm coming to see you at three o'clock. You see them the following week. This is what happens. They say that the meeting will begin at 8 o'clock sharp. You turn up at 8.00, no one in sight, nine o'clock the organisers come, ten o'clock the platform is erected or the stage. Eleven o'clock they assemble the audience, and at half past eleven you start speaking, and this is your 8 o'clock meeting. So they're not very punctual, so perhaps it isn't surprising that the Buddha laid down as the first duty of the employee towards the employer punctuality, turn up for work on time, principle of clocking in, or rather of clocking being made unnecessary. And the Buddha says show a good spirit by starting work before the employer. The employee should be up and working before the employer.

Secondly, he should finish work after the employer. In most places, factories and offices and so on, people work with one eye fixed on the clock, and the minute the clock strikes, down they fling their pens or typewriters if they haven't flung them down before. And this is the sort of spirit in which they work. So the Buddha says this is no good, as it were. Let the employee carry on working after the employer.

Thirdly, the employee should be sincere and trustworthy. This is quite obvious: sincere and trustworthy.

Fourthly, perform his duties to the satisfaction of the employer. This is also very simple, very obvious, and still very relevant.

And fifthly, and this shows the Buddha's psychology, he should speak in praise of his employer. Now, you may find the man is a very good workman, he does his duty, doesn't cheat the employer, but when he gets outside what he says about the boss, well it isn't anybody's business. Sometimes, as we know, the air is blue. I remember listening only a few days ago to a radio programme in which a trades union representative had something to say about employers in general, and it certainly wasn't very complimentary. He certainly wasn't speaking in their praise. The Buddha, of course, had in mind a good employer, the employer who is observing the five precepts of the employer. It's only right, it's only natural, and it's psychologically good and healthy that the employee should speak in praise of such an employer.

So in this way we see that there is no exploitation. The employer doesn't exploit the employee, the employee doesn't exploit the employer. There's a happy, harmonious working relationship. Each takes from the other, without harming, what he needs and gives what he can. The employer takes the labour, the skill of the employee, and gives what he can to the best of his ability in terms of cash and so on. And in the same way the employee gives of his best and takes what

he needs. So in this way, as I've said, there's a happy, harmonious working relationship. There's no question here, as we have in modern life, modern society, in modern states, no question of a grim, protracted bargaining between employers and unions for instance, as though they were in two opposite camps, or even like two hostile armies arranging a truce. This sort of thing is very unhealthy.

Now, we've dealt with the principle of non-exploitation in our economic life, but this principle can be extended. We can say that the significance of non-exploitation extends far beyond the field of economics. It has its ramifications, we may say, in the psychological, even in the spiritual fields. In fact we can say that the principle of non-exploitation can be extended to cover the whole field of personal relationships, and especially the closer and more intimate personal relationships. So, let's look at this for a few minutes. Let's take it, for instance, that we happen to meet someone. We're always meeting people, so this is a very ordinary illustration. We meet someone. So it so happens that we start liking the particular person that we meet. So the question arises, why do we like them? Obviously, we like them because they satisfy a certain need in us. This need can be conscious, but more often it's unconscious. We start liking people, but we don't know why we like them. Really we like them because they satisfy, or fulfill, a certain unconscious need of ours, a need of which we are not usually conscious, though we can become conscious of it if we try. Usually, of course, we don't try. We rationalise the situation, and we say, for instance, I like them because they're considerate, or I like them because they're kind, or I like them because they love animals as I do, or I like them because they're interested in Buddhism, and so on. But the real source of the liking, the base of the liking may be something quite different, in fact, usually is something quite different. That particular person whom we say we like for such-and-such reason, satisfies a certain need, perhaps a very deep need in us. They may, for instance, satisfy our need for attention, satisfy our needs to be at the centre of things, if not THE centre of things. So if we get this sort of attention which we need psychologically from someone, then we shall naturally start speaking in terms of our liking for them. So if they satisfy a need of ours of this sort, then obviously we shall want that situation, that relationship to continue. They've started satisfying a need, and obviously as long as that need continues we shall continue to want the satisfaction of that need. We want to go on being satisfied in that need. So the question arises, how can we ensure that the need is being satisfied by that person? So how can we ensure that this state of affairs doesn't come to an end? Now, the best way of doing this, the best way of ensuring this, is finding out what the other person needs, and satisfying that need. This is what people usually do, whether consciously or unconsciously. Now the other person for instance, may have a need, a craving for appreciation of some kind or other. Suppose they've written a book, or painted a picture, and they feel they're not sufficiently appreciated, no one recognises their literary genius or their artistic talent, so we, as it were, latch on to this. We start saying, what a wonderful writer you are, or what a beautiful picture. We give them all this appreciation and encouragement that they feel that they need. So they become dependent on us for the satisfaction of their need, just as we have become dependent on them for the satisfaction of our need, and in this way a situation of mutual dependence and exploitation is created. One depends on the other for attention, and he depends upon the first person for appreciation. So a sort of mutual, but largely unconscious, bargain is struck, and this is the basis of most human relationships. In other words, you give me what I need, and I shall give you what you need. In other words the basis is mutual exploitation.

Neither person, neither party to the bargain, questions whether the need is a real need and ought to be satisfied, or whether it's an artificial and unhealthy need and ought not to be satisfied, or were better not satisfied. The whole process, as I've said, is more or less unconscious. So a further question arises, people might well ask, should we never then take what we need from another person? And the answer lies in our original verse of the Dhammapada. Yes, we may take what we need from another person, whether it's material, or psychological, or spiritual, but we must take it like the bee, without injuring the flower, without injuring the person from whom we take. In other words, we must take non-exploitively.

We may say there are two kinds of needs. The first kind is based on exploitation. It's a sort of bargain. You give me; I'll give you. But the second kind of need is free from exploitation: it isn't so based. And we usually find that a relationship which is based on exploitation or mutual exploitation either terminates catastrophically, or it settles down into a routine of ever-increasing boredom. If you are involved in a relationship with anybody where you give him because he's giving you, and he's giving you because you're

giving him, well, for some time the need is satisfied and this sort of exchange goes on, and this sort of bargain is continued to be honoured, but eventually it becomes very very repetitious, and very very boring indeed.

But the second kind of satisfaction of need, that which is conscious, that which is more aware, which is not exploitive, which is not based on any kind of bargain, this can go on, we may say, continually deepening, becoming more and more meaningful, when the relationship is based upon what we may call a full and free, not exchange, but a sort of mutual giving without any thought of return, just as we get ideally between parents and children at their best. The parents give freely to the children without thinking that the children are going to give back to them later on. They just give, because that's right and that's natural, and in the same way the children also give to the parents to the best of their capacity, not thinking that they are giving in return for what their good parents have done, but simply because they love the parents. So in this way the parents give, the children give. It's mutual. But no giving because you are given to, or given to because you are giving, nothing like that, nothing exploitive, nothing of the nature of a sort of bargain. So this is the basic principle, this is the Buddha's philosophy, we may say, of personal relations, that personal relationships should be based on this principle of non-exploitation, whether it's in the life of religion, whether it's in the field of economics, or even we may say politics, or even of more intimate personal relationships. Still non-exploitation, mutual generosity is the guiding, is the fundamental principle. So this is the sort of philosophy which the Buddha exemplified in his own person. The Buddha, as we know, spent five and forty years going about in North Eastern India simply teaching. So what did he get? All that he took from people was one meal a day, was a few yards of yellow cloth, was a little hut in somebody's garden to stay in the course of his travels, and occasional supplies of medicine. This was all the Buddha took from other people in the course of his whole life. Nothing more than this. He didn't even have any books, because there were no books in those days, just food, clothing, shelter and medicine. That is all the Buddha took from other members of the human race. But then if you think what the Buddha gave, not in exchange, there's no question of exchange, no question of a bargain, but what he gave. Gave out of compassion, or gave out of understanding, or gave out of sympathy, gave his teaching, gave his guidance, gave his compassion, gave his love, gave his understanding without any thought of return. So you see here a perfect example, one may say, of this right personal relationship, the Buddha taking just what he needed, but giving all he possibly could, so there's no sort of commensurability between them whatsoever. If you look at what the Buddha took it's infinitesimal, but if you look at what the Buddha gave then it is simply incalculable. There's no relationship between the two. So this is the principle we may say of human life, the principle upon which, the philosophy upon which human relationships should be based. Take simply what you need, whether material, whether psychological, emotional, spiritual, take just what you need without exploiting, and give whatsoever you can on all levels, again material, cultural, educational, moral, spiritual, religious, every level, but don't try to connect the two, so much given therefore so much taken, so much taken therefore so much given. This sort of bargaining, this sort of shopkeeper's mentality, we may say, is the absolute bane and curse of the human race. So we can even go so far as to say that only when our life is based firmly on this principle of non-exploitation can there be any peace, any real progress, any real large-scale human upliftment in the world. So it's this sort of philosophy that the follower of the Buddha is expected to exemplify in his own life, the philosophy of non-exploitation, the Buddha's philosophy of personal relations.