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THE SPIRITUAL SIGNIFICANCE OF HUMAN RELATIONSHIP

Greetings, my dearest, dearest friends. Blessings for every one of you. Blessed be your very life, your every breath, your thoughts and your feelings.

This lecture deals with relationships and their tremendous significance from the spiritual point of view -- that of individual growth and unification. First, I would like to point out that on the human level of manifestation individual units of consciousness do exist, which sometimes harmonize, but very often conflict with one another, creating friction and crisis. Yet beyond this level of manifestation there are no other fragmented units of consciousness. Above the human level there is only one consciousness, through which every single created entity is expressed differently. When one comes into one's own, one experiences this truth, without, however, losing a sense of individuality. This can be felt very distinctly when you deal with your own inner disharmonies, my friends. For there, too, exactly the same principle applies.

In your present state, a part of your innermost being is developed and governs your thinking, feeling, willing, and acting. There are other parts, still in a lower state of development, which also govern and influence your thinking, feeling, willing and acting. Thus you find yourself divided, and this always creates tension, pain, anxiety, as well as inner and outer difficulties. Some aspects of your personality are in truth; others, in error and distortion. The resulting confusion causes grave disturbances. What you usually do is push one side out of the way and identify with the other. Yet this denial of a part of you cannot bring unification. On the contrary, it widens the split. What must be done is to bring out the deviating, conflicting side and face it -- face the entire ambivalence. Only then do you find the ultimate reality of your unified self. As you know, unification and peace emerge to the degree you recognize, accept, and understand the nature of the inner conflict.

Exactly the same law applies to the unity or dissension between outwardly separate and different entities. They, too, are one, beyond the level of appearance. The dissension is caused not by actual differences among units of consciousness, but, just as in the individual, by differences in the development of the manifesting universal consciousness.

Even though the principle of unification is exactly the same within and among individuals, it cannot be applied to another human being unless it has first been applied to one's inner self. If the divergent parts of your self are not approached according to this truth, and your ambivalence is not faced, accepted, and understood, the process of unification cannot be put into practice with another person. This is a very important fact, which explains the great emphasis of this pathwork on first approaching the self. Only then can relationship be cultivated in a meaningful and effective way.

I shall now try to outline some elements of dissension and unification between human beings in relationship and show how these parallel the individual process. Before doing so I should like to

say that relationship represents the greatest challenge for the individual, for it is only in relationship to others that unresolved problems still existing within the individual psyche are affected and activated. This is why many individuals withdraw from interaction with others. The illusion can sometimes be maintained that the problems arise from the other person when one feels disturbance only in his or her presence, and not when by oneself.

Being alone elicits the inner call for contact, and the less contact is cultivated, the more acute the longing becomes. This then, is a different kind of pain -- the pain of loneliness and frustration. But contact makes it difficult to maintain the illusion for too long that the inner self is faultless and harmonious. It requires mental aberration to claim for too long that problems in relationship are caused only by others and not by oneself. This is why relationships are simultaneously a fulfillment, a challenge, and a gauge to one's inner state. The friction that arises out of relating with others can be a sharp instrument of purification and self-recognition if one is inclined to use it.

By withdrawing from this challenge and sacrificing the fulfillment of intimate contact, many inner problems are never called into play. The illusion of inner peace and unity that comes from avoidance of relating has even led to concepts that spiritual growth is being furthered by isolation. Nothing could be farther from the truth. This statement must not be confused with the notion that intervals of seclusion are necessary for inner concentration and self-confrontation, however. But these periods should always alternate with contact -- and the more intimate such contact is, the more it expresses spiritual maturity.

Contact and lack of contact with others can be observed in various stages. There are many degrees of contact between the crass extremes of total outer and inner isolation, at one end, and the deepest, most intimate relatedness at the other, such as capacity to love and accept others, to deal with the mutually arising problems, to find balance between self-assertion and giving in, to give and receive and to be acutely aware of the interacting levels. There are those who have obtained a certain superficial ability to relate but who still withdraw from a more meaningful, open, unmasked mutual revealing. I might say that the average present-day human being fluctuates somewhere between the two extremes.

It is also possible to measure one's personal sense of fulfillment by the depth of relatedness and intimate contact, by the strength of the feelings one permits oneself to experience, and by the willingness to give and receive. Frustration indicates an absence of contact, which, in turn, is a precise indicator that the self withdraws from the challenge of relationship, thereby sacrificing personal fulfillment, pleasure, love, and joy. When you want to share only on the basis of receiving according to your own terms, and you are in fact secretly unwilling to share, your longings must remain unfulfilled. People would be well advised to consider their unfulfilled longings from this point of view, rather than indulging in the usual assumption that one is unlucky and unfairly put upon by life.

One's contentment and fulfillment in relationship is a much neglected yardstick for one's own development. Relationship with others is a mirror of one's own state and thus a direct help to one's self-purification. Conversely, only by thorough self-honesty and self-facing can relationships be sustained, can feelings expand and contact blossom in long-term relationships. So you can see, my friends, that relationships represent a tremendously important aspect of human growth.

The power and significance of relationship often pose severe problems for those who are still in the throes of their own inner conflicts. The unfulfilled longing becomes unbearably painful when isolation is chosen due to the difficulty of contact. This can be resolved only when you seriously settle down to seek the cause for this conflict within your self, without using the defense of annihilating guilt and self-blame, which of course eliminates any possibility of really getting at the core of the conflict. This search, together with the inner willingness to change, must be cultivated in order to escape the painful dilemma in which both available alternatives -- isolation and contact -- are unbearable.

Fear of pleasure is, to a large degree, connected with the problem of dealing with others and of facing up to one's own stubborn blindness about the self. It is also important to remember that withdrawal can be very subtle and may be outwardly unnoticeable, manifesting only in a certain guardedness and distorted self-protection. Outer good fellowship does not necessarily imply a capacity and willingness for inner closeness. For many, closeness is too taxing. On the surface this seems related to how difficult others are, but actually the difficulty lies in the self, regardless of how imperfect others may also be.

When people whose spiritual development is on different levels are involved with one another, it is always the more highly developed person who is responsible for the relationship. Specifically, that person is responsible for searching the depths of the interaction which creates any friction and disharmony between the parties.

The less developed person is not as capable of such a search, being still in a state of blaming the other and depending on the other's doing "right" in order to avoid unpleasantness or frustration. Also, the less developed person is always caught up in the fundamental error of duality. From this perspective any friction is seen in terms of "only one of us is right." A problem in the other automatically seems to whitewash this person, although in reality his or her own negative involvement may be infinitely more weighty than the other person's.

The spiritually more developed person is capable of realistic, non-dualistic perception. That person may see that either one of you may have a deep problem, but that does not eliminate the importance of the possibly much lesser problem of the other one. The more developed one will always be willing and able to search for his or her own involvement whenever he or she is negatively affected, no matter how blatantly at fault the other one may be. A person of spiritual and emotional immaturity and crudeness will always put the bulk of the blame on the other. All this applies to any kind of relationship: mates, parents and children, friendships, or business contacts.

The tendency to make yourself emotionally dependent on others, the overcoming of which is such an important aspect of the growth process, largely comes from wanting to absolve yourself from blame or extract yourself from difficulty when establishing and maintaining a relationship. It seems so much easier to shift most of this burden to others. But what a price to pay! Doing this renders you helpless indeed and brings about isolation, or unending pain and friction with others. It is only when you begin truly to assume self-responsibility by looking at your own problem in the relationship and by a willingness to change that freedom is established and relationships become fruitful and joyous.

If the more highly developed person refuses to undertake the appropriate spiritual duty to assume responsibility for the relationship and look for the core of dissension within, he or she will never really understand the mutual interaction, how one problem affects the other. The relationship must then deteriorate, leaving both parties confused and less able to cope with the self and others. On the other hand, if the spiritually developed person accepts this responsibility, he or she will also help the other in a subtle way. If he or she can desist from the temptation to constantly belabor the obvious sour points of the other and look within, he or she will raise his or her own development considerably and spread peace and joy. The poison of friction will soon be eliminated. It will also become possible to find other partners for a truly mutual growth process.

When two equals relate, both carry the full responsibility for the relationship. This is indeed a beautiful venture, a deeply satisfying state of mutuality. The slightest flaw in a mood will be recognized for its inner meaning and thus the growth process is kept up. Both will recognize their co-creation of this momentary flaw -- whether it be an actual friction or a momentary deadness of feelings. The inner reality of the interaction will become increasingly more significant. This will largely prevent injury to the relationship.

Let me emphasize here that when I speak of being responsible for the less developed person, I do not mean that another human being can ever carry the burden for the actual difficulties of others. This can never be. What I mean is that difficulties of interaction in a relationship are usually not explored in depth by the individual whose spiritual development is more primitive. He or she will render others responsible for his or her unhappiness and disharmony in a given interaction and is not able, or willing, to see the whole issue. Thus that person is not in a position to eliminate the disharmony. Only those who assume responsibility for finding the inner disturbance and mutual effect can do so. Hence the spiritually more primitive person always depends on the spiritually more evolved one.

A relationship between individuals in which the destructiveness of the less developed one makes growth, harmony, and good feelings impossible, or in which the contact is overwhelmingly negative, should be severed. As a rule, the more highly developed person should assume the initiative. If he or she does not, this indicates some unrecognized weakness and fear that needs to be faced. If a relationship is dissolved on this ground; namely, that it is more destructive and pain-producing than constructive and harmonious, it should be done when the inner problems and mutual interactions are fully recognized by the one who takes the initiative to dissolve an old tie. This will prevent him or her from forming a new relationship with similar underlying currents and interactions. It also means that the decision to sever the connection has been made because of growth, rather than as a result of spite, fear, or escape.

To explore the underlying interaction and the various effects of a relationship where both people's difficulties are laid bare and accepted, is by no means easy. But nothing can be more beautiful and rewarding. Anyone who comes into the state of enlightenment where this is possible will no longer fear any kind of interaction. Difficulties and fears arise to the exact degree that you still project on others your own problems in relating and still render others responsible for anything that goes against your liking. This can take many subtle forms. You may constantly concentrate on the faults of others, because at first glance such concentration appears justified to you. You may subtly overemphasize one side of an interaction, or exclude another. Such distortions indicate projection and denial of self-responsibility for the difficulties in relating. This denial fosters

dependency on the perfection of the other party, which in turn creates fear and hostility for feeling let down when the other does not measure up to the perfect standard.

My dear friends, no matter what wrong the other person does, if you are disturbed, there must be something in you that you overlook. When I say disturbed, I mean this in a particular sense. I do not speak of clear-cut anger that expresses itself guiltlessly and does not leave a trace of inner confusion and pain. I mean the kind of disturbance that comes out of conflict and breeds further conflict. In spite of my having warned you repeatedly about overlooking your own part in the conflict, it is most difficult for people to look within and find the source of the disturbance in themselves. Even you, my friends, who are sincerely searching for liberation and unification within yourselves, are still involved in deep projection in this area.

A favorite tendency among people is to say, "You are doing it to me." The game of making others guilty is so pervasive that it constantly passes unnoticed. One human being blames the other, one country blames the other, one group blames the other. This is a constant process at humanity's present level of development. It is indeed one of the most harmful and illusory processes imaginable.

Perhaps only a few of you can begin to see how you are doing this, and when you see it, you stop it only occasionally. Begin to question yourself and cease placing the guilt on others, which is always a hidden form of hostility that whitewashes the self. One derives pleasure from doing this, although the pain that ensues and the insoluble conflicts that follow are infinitely disproportionate to the puny, momentary pleasure. Those who play this game truly harm themselves and others, and I strongly recommend that you begin to be aware of your blind involvement in this guilt-shifting game.

But how about the "victim"? How is that person to cope? As a victim, your first problem is that you are not even aware of what is happening. Most of the time, the victimization happens in a subtle, emotional, and unarticulated fashion. The silent, covert, indirect blame is being launched without a spoken word. It is expressed indirectly in many ways. Now, obviously, the first necessity is concise, articulate awareness, for otherwise you will unconsciously respond in equally destructive, falsely self-defensive ways. Then neither person really knows the intricate levels of action, reaction and interaction until the threads become so enmeshed that it seems impossible to disentangle them. Many a relationship has faltered due to such unconscious interaction.

The launching of blame spreads poison, fear, and at least as much guilt as one tries to project. The recipients of this blame and guilt may react in many different ways, according to their own problems and unresolved conflicts. As long as the reaction is blind and the projection of guilt unconscious, the counterreaction must also be neurotic and destructive. Only conscious perception can prohibit this. Only then will you be able to refuse a burden that is being placed on you. Only then can you articulate and pinpoint it.

In a relationship that is about to blossom, one must be on the lookout for this pitfall, which is all the more difficult to detect because guilt projection is so widespread. Also, the recipients should look for it in themselves as well as in the other. And I do not mean here a straightforward confrontation about something the other person did wrong. I mean the subtle blame for personal unhappiness. This is what must be challenged.

The only way you can avoid becoming a victim of blame and guilt projection is to avoid doing it yourself. To the degree you indulge yourself in this subtly negative attitude -- and you may do it in a different way than the one who does it to you -- you will be unaware of it being done to you and will therefore become victimized by it. The mere awareness will make all the difference -- whether or not you verbally express your perception and confront the other person. Only to the degree that you undefensively explore and accept your own problematic reactions and distortions, negativities and destructiveness, can you defuse someone else's guilt projection. Only then will you not be drawn into a maze of falseness and confusion in which uncertainty, defensiveness, and weakness may make you either retreat or become overaggressive. Only then will you no longer confuse self-assertion with hostility, or flexible compromise with unhealthy submission.

These are the aspects which determine the ability to cope with relationships. The more profoundly understood and lived these new attitudes are, the more intimate, fulfilling, and beautiful human interaction will become.

How can you assert your rights and reach into the universe for fulfillment and pleasure? How can you love without fear unless you approach relating to others the way I have outlined above? Unless by learning to do this you purify yourself, there must always be a threat when it comes to intimacy: that one or both will resort to using the whip of loading guilt upon each other. Loving, sharing, and profound and satisfying closeness to others could be a purely positive power without any threat if these snares were looked at, discovered, and dissolved. It is of utmost importance that you look for them in yourselves, my friends.

The most challenging, beautiful, spiritually important and growth-producing kind of relationship is the one between man and woman. The power that brings two people together in love and attraction, and the pleasure involved are a small aspect of cosmic reality. It is as though each created entity knew unconsciously about the bliss of this state and sought to realize it in the most potent way open to humanity: in love and sexuality between man and woman. The power that draws them together is the purest spiritual energy, leading to an inkling of the purest spiritual state.

However, when a man and a woman stay together in a more enduring and committed relationship, maintaining and even increasing bliss depends entirely on how the two relate to one another. Are they aware of the direct relationship between enduring pleasure and inner growth? Do they use the inevitable difficulties in the relationship as yardsticks for their own inner difficulties? Do they communicate in the deepest, most truthful, self-revealing way, sharing their inner problems, helping each other, rather than placing mutual guilt on each other and whitewashing themselves? The answers to these questions will determine whether the relationship falters, dissolves, stagnates -- or blossoms.

When you look at the world around you, you will undoubtedly see that very few human beings grow and reveal themselves in such an open way. Equally few realize that growing together and through each other determines the solidity of feelings, of pleasure, of enduring love and respect. It is therefore not surprising that long-lasting relationships are almost invariably more or less dead in feelings.

Difficulties that arise in a relationship are always signals for something unattended to. They are a loud message for those who can hear it. The sooner it is heeded, the more spiritual energy will be released, so that the state of bliss can expand along with the inner being of both partners. There is a mechanism in a relationship between a man and a woman that can be likened to a very finely calibrated instrument that shows the finest and most subtle aspects of the relationship and the individual state of the two people involved. This is not sufficiently recognized by even the most aware and sophisticated people who are otherwise familiar with spiritual and psychological truth. Every day and every hour one's inner state and feelings are a testimony to one's state of growth. To the degree they are heeded, the interaction, the feelings, the freedom of flow within and toward each other will blossom.

The perfectly mature and spiritually valid relationship must always be deeply connected with personal growth. The moment a relationship is experienced as irrelevant to inner growth, left on its own, as it were, it will falter. Sooner or later it must. And that is the fate of the majority of human relationships -- especially the intimate one between two mates. Relationships are not recognized as a mirror for inner growth, so they gradually wear out. The first steam evaporates and nothing remains. Either overt friction and dissension or stagnation and boredom will wreck what was once so promising.

Only when both grow to their ultimate, inherent potential can the relationship become more and more dynamic and alive. This work has to be done individually and mutually. When relationship is approached in that way, it will be built on rock, not sand. No fear will ever find room under such circumstances. Feelings will expand, and security about the self and each other will grow. At any given moment, each partner will serve as a mirror to the inner state of the other and therefore to the relationship.

Whenever there is friction or deadness, something must be stuck, something that ought to be seen. Some interaction between the two people remains unclear. If it is understood and brought out into the open, growth will proceed at maximum speed, and, in the dimension of feeling, happiness, bliss, profound experience, and ecstasy will become forever deeper and more beautiful, and life will acquire more meaning.

Conversely, fear of intimacy implies rigidity and the denial of one's own share in the relationship's difficulties. Anyone who ignores these principles, or who pays only lip service to them, is emotionally not ready to assume the responsibility for his or her inner suffering -- either within a relationship or in its absence. This state also brings about fear of one's feelings. You are still at that primitive juncture where you shift guilt on others. Fear and uncertainty will make it impossible, under such conditions, to find bliss and closeness -- fearless closeness.

So you see, my friends, it is of the greatest importance to recognize that bliss and beauty, which are eternal spiritual realities, are available to all those who seek the key to the problems of human interaction, as well as to loneliness, within their own hearts. True growth is as much a spiritual reality as are profound fulfillment, vibrant aliveness, and blissful, joyous relating. When you are inwardly ready to relate to another human being in such a fashion, you will find the appropriate partner with whom this manner of sharing is possible. It will no longer frighten you, will no longer beset you with conscious or unconscious fears when you use this all-important key. You cannot ever feel helpless or victimized when the significant transition has taken place in your life and you no

longer render others responsible for what you experience or fail to experience. Thus growth and fulfilled, beautiful living become one and the same.

May you all carry with you this new material and an inner energy awakened by your goodwill. May these words be the beginning of a new inner modality to meet life, to finally decide, "I want to risk my good feelings. I want to seek the cause in me, rather than in the other person, so that I become free to love." This kind of meditation will indeed bear fruit. If you carry away a germ, a particle, of this lecture, it has truly been fruitful. Be blessed, all of you, my dearest friends, so that you become the gods that you potentially are.

Edited by Judith and John Saly

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