STEP III, 2011 Q9

9 Particles P and Q have masses $3m$ and $4m$, respectively. They lie on the outer curved surface of a smooth circular cylinder of radius a which is fixed with its axis horizontal. They are connected by a light inextensible string of length $\frac{1}{2}\pi a$, which passes over the surface of the cylinder. The particles and the string all lie in a vertical plane perpendicular to the axis of the cylinder, and the axis intersects this plane at O. Initially, the particles are in equilibrium.

Equilibrium is slightly disturbed and Q begins to move downwards. Show that while the two particles are still in contact with the cylinder the angle θ between OQ and the vertical satisfies

$$7a\dot{\theta}^2 + 8g\cos\theta + 6g\sin\theta = 10g\,.$$

(i) Given that Q loses contact with the cylinder first, show that it does so when $\theta = \beta$, where β satisfies

$$15\cos\beta + 6\sin\beta = 10.$$

(ii) Show also that while P and Q are still in contact with the cylinder the tension in the string is $\frac{12}{7}mg(\sin\theta + \cos\theta)$.