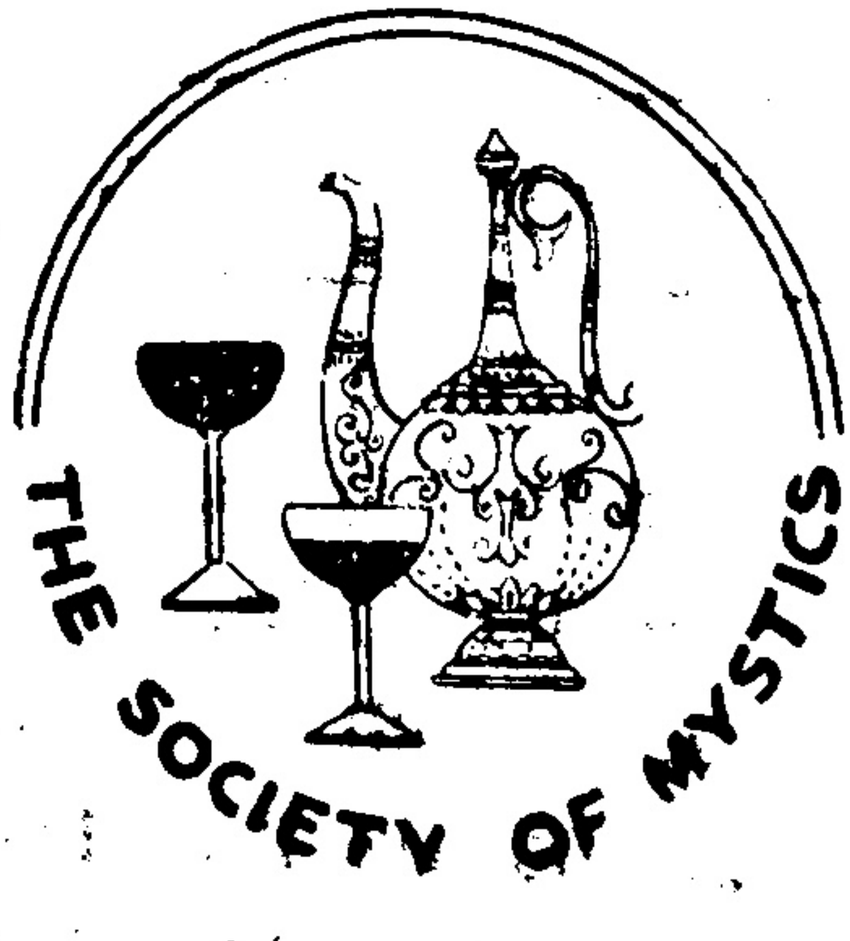
Pursuit of Spiritual Progress and Perfection



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Gen. Secretary

Pursuit of Spiritual Progress and Perfection

We are meeting for the first time in the New Year. Let us hope and pray, that, it will be an year of fruitful efforts and of international peace and good-will. Each and every-one of us should try to contribute in whatever way we can to peace, amity, good-will and above all to human happiness.

It appears that man in this so, called progressive age is being punished for his mistakes of omission and commission. Ordinarily, punishment is understood to mean to be sentenced to death or to rigorous or simple punishment.

But, we are being punished in another way. It is a silent and unostentatious way, the implications of which, are known to a microscopic minority and understood by a few persons given to meditative turn of mind.

Is it not punishment to be deprived of happiness ? Is it not punishment to be ever engrossed in anxiety ? Is it not punishment to be seized and besiezed by care and fear ? Is it not punishment to be ever restless induced by over ambition? Is it not punishment to be deprived of a solemn serene, and happy home life ? Is it not punishment to have no mental peace ? Is it not punishment to be ever desiring more and more ? Is it not punishment to be dictated by inordinate desires ? Is it not punishment to be steeped in pessimism ?

This is a starange spectacle to see to be so punished. To see is to abhor it. To try to avoid it requires exertion of will. What is this punishment ? Is it reformatory or retributive, or deterrnt punishment ?

We are thus living in an institution, to which we are sent like juvenile offenders for reformatory purposes,

If it is reformatory punishment meant for our own good, then we should try to reform ourselves by our own efforts.

If it is retributive in nature which means vengeance or requital, then we should not repeat the thing, which has invited vengeance.

If it is deterrent punishment, we should make amends for our past behaviour and mode of living.

To be a mere spectator to this phenomenon, where every one is serving his rigorous or simple imprisonment, is to invite pity. But, it has been said, that, "Self-pity is the worst poverty."

Poverty does not mean merely financial stringency. It is not to be poor as ordinarly understood. It is not to be deprived of wealth and riches. It is not to be living in straitened circumstances.

Poverty, in fact, is not the absence of affluent circumstances. Poverty has different connotations, shapes, forms and kinds.

Inertia is a type of poverty.

Want of constancy and perseverance is an ignoble form of poverty.

Lack of self-control is itself a kind of poverty.

Poverty also appears in the shape of total indifference to enthusiasm.

Wandering mind may be termed as abject poverty, which leaves no scope for a person to concentrate upon his work in hand, thus rendering him unfit to earn money, or to secure promotion, or obtain better prospects in life.

Indecision is another type of poverty. It lands one in misery and mental affiction.

To have no patience is to parade one's own spiritual poverty.

They talk so much about human progress. But, they do not define progress. They talk of advancement, not knowing what advancement is. They talk of enlightened age, in which, men and women have come to appreciate and admire the human struggle for better living, better earning and better thinking.

To go onward and forward is progress, indeed. But, what about going down-ward and backward ? Will it be termed as progress ?

It can not be termed as progress. It is a set-back and like any set-back it has hindered progress. It is an obstacle to progress.

Progress is, ordinarily understood to mean material progress. If a person secures some promotion, or income in pay, it is termed as progress. If a person earns more money in a short time, it is considered as a tribute to his intelligence and skill, and is termed as rapid progress. But, nobody cares to know whether he has earned money by means fair or foul. In other words, people are interested to look to the end. They are not interested in the means employed in achieving the end.

But, morality demands that not only the end should be ethical, noble and good, but, the means employed to secure the end should be equally noble, sublime and above reproach.

The mystics interpret progress in a different way. Their approach to progress is different. Their angle of vision is totally different from those, who take a narrow and one-sided view of progress, meaning material advancement, material comfort, influence, power and position.

To a mystic, it is a lop-sided view of progress. According to them, progress should be comprehensive enough to embrace every aspect of life, and should be concerned with different facets of personality. It should not leave unexplored and undiscovered the other aspects, notably, the intellectual, moral and spiritual aspects.

Pursuit of knowledge and learning ceaselessly and continuously is, no doubt, a sign of progress.

Likewise, pursuit of truth, constitutes a milestone in progress.

To the mystics, to take is not progress. To give is a mark of charitable disposition, which is an achievement, denoting progress.

To exploit human resources is not progress.

To be self-seeking is not progress.

All progress depends upon hope, belief and faith.

To have hope is to walk on the road, which leads to progress.

To have belief is to be sure of achieving progress.

To have faith is to move hopefully forward and onward.

Might, muscle and money do not secure the permanent base of progress.

To have vision and aspiration may be good, but, vision should be crystal clear, and aspiration should be socialised and moderate.

To emulate is good, as it creates an urge for progress. But, to have jealousy is to admit failure in achieving the target of progress.

Ambition should be cut to normal size. It should not be allowed to appear ugly, dreadful and terrible. Ambitious people keep an eye upon their own self-interest. They give preference to their own good, ignoring, thus, the good of others.

Individual progress should be distinguished from collective progress. Collective progress is the sum total of the efforts

of the individuals, comprising the society to secure progress, termed as human progress,.

Man is a complex phenomenon of good and evil, virtue and vice and of hate and love.

According to the mystics, when he is directed by good, he is said to have made progress in the right direction. But, when he is overpowerd by evil, then, he is said to have gone astray. Good leads him to promotion. Evil leads him to depreciation.

Poverty, want and destitution do to constitute an hindrance to progress as understood by the mystics.

It is an open secret, that, the prophets have been poor. But, their poverty did not prove an obstacle, and did not prevent them from spreading the Gospel of Truth.

Likewise, the saints were not rich persons. They had no material resources at their command. They had nothing in their possession except the will to perform their mission.

Of the Sufi saint-Rabia of Basra, it is said, that, she had one earthern pot, by which she drank water and by which, she made ablution. She had one torn mattress, upon which, she would lie down and offer prayers. She had one earthern utensil, in which, she would sometime cook food. She had one brick which served as a pillow.

But, inspite of all this, she contributed a great deal to human happiness, and to the avdancement of mystic knowledge.

Her spiritual progress rests upon firm foundations.

It is not progress, to be dominated by circumstances.

It is progress, indeed, to overcome circumstances and turn them into an opportunity for good.

Progress is measured by the rhymtic steps, taken towards Unfoldment.

To be freed from pride and prejudice is, no doubt, a mark of progress. To bury the dead past and to live in the living present is progress.

Progress implies to do the duty assigned. To live to-day in right earnest is progress. To be fortified by the assurancc of to-morrow is an expression of optimism which is an aid to progress.

Progress goes forward.

If it does not go forward, it ceases to be progress.

To be benefitted by past experience is an indication of progressive development.

It is progress to try to be better every day.

It is progressive urge to be better in every way.

To solve problems in a dispassionate way is progress.

According to the mystics, he, alone, can claim to have made progress, who has tuned his heart and trained his mind, and, who lives in peacc, which is abiding and living.

To adorn virtue and to be advanced in the pursuit of truth is progress no doubt, as it gives peace, prosperity and happiness.

Now, the question arises as to what is spiritual progreses? Spiritual progress means and implies the achievement of freedom from all those vices, which deprive a person of inner joy, inner satisfaction and inner harmony.

Progress conceived as a concept of change implies change for the better.

Spiritual progress depends in a great degree upon the inner life, which oneleads.

To be of forgiving nature is to be tolerant. To be tolerant is to acquire the sprit of accomodation.

The world should not be "too much with us". In order to be happy and self-sufficient, one should have as little as possible with the world. This is only possible, when we try to become an epitome of simple living and high thinking.

We should train and contol ourself. To ignore the demands of self and to control it shows our determination to be a conqueror.

Conquest of self is the best conquest. Conquest of a country underlines the idea of ambition and self-aggrandizement. But, conquest of self is the manifestation of the spirit of self-sacrifice, abstinence, asceticism and self-control.

Self-control is a virtue, coveted by those, desirous of leading a life in conformity with the standards, laid down by the mystics To the mystics, self-control makes it easy and convenient to cover the journey, leading to enlightement.

The journey, which a mystic undertakes, in order to explore and discover the land of light and love is an arduous journey, indeed.

The journey should be undertaken under the directions and suggestions of the spiritual guide, who knows the dangers and pitfulls, besetting the journey.

It is obligatory upon the aspirant to repose trust and confidence in his spiritual guide and teacher.

The spiritual guide stands as a light tower in the boisterous sea which the aspirant has entered in.

The spiritual guide knows best what is good for him, and what is not proper for him. He is a physician, indeed, who knows the spiritual malady, from which his followers are suffering.

He prescribes prescription for them. But, his prescription is not the same for every one.

If he finds some one to be under the delusion of haughtiness, vanity and pride, he suggests the mixture of humility, meeknees, and humbleness.

If he finds someone, suffering from the malady of greed and lust, he suggests the capsule of contentment.

For those, found to be revengeful, he suggests a pill of forgiveness. For some one, fond of fame, name and fortune, he suggests the mixture of silence and seclusion.

For thosee, suffering from wandering mind, meditation is prescribed as the best remedy.

Those, having no patience, are asked to take the tonic called "wait and watch."

Those suffering from ingratitude are asked to take the dose of introspection.

If he finds some one to be vaccilating, and not firm and constant in hisendeavour to reach the goal, he takes him by hand, and gives him such attention, by which, he picks up courage, spiritual force vigour, stamina and strength to face the hardships, and to overcome his inabilty to pursue regularly and to travel hopefully.

Thought of lust, wealth and riches gives birth to lust and greed A greedy man is a blind man. He is deprived of the sense of right and wrong. He has no sense of discrimination.

To do duty is to be freed from the care and fear of the world, worldly gains and losses. This proves helpful to the attainment of enlightenment and the sense of proportion and perspective,

In order to save oneself from hatred and enmity, one should so develop himself mentally, that, he comes to believe that God is everywhere and in every person and in every

thing, and that the whole universe is the manifestation of the Glory of God.

Man is running his own inner Government. This Self-Government is the privilege of man, requiring a pledge to conduct it efficiently, and in conformity with the moral and social norms attached to it.

But, for conducting the Self-Government efficiently and properly, Self-development is necessary. Self-development requires self-discipline. Self-discipline requires the training of mind, habits and senses. Training of mind is a silent process, pursued in a spirit of self improvement,

People seek spiritual perfection through various means. Sometake to prayer and worship. Some find it in asceticism, and rigours. Some find clue in knowledge and learing.

The search for spiritual perfection leads some seekers to the path of love. Some find solace in service. There are others, however, who rely upon the Grace of God, and, who believe, that, without the Grace of God, life can not be changed for the better. They assert, that, it is, also, the Grace of God, that a person in inclined towards spiritual progress.

Spiritual progress is an achievement, and like every achievement, it requires constant struggle and permanent vigil. To achieve a thing requires exertion and determination. It is a painstaking task, but, one need not be frustrated.

A seeker should avoid wordly attachments as far as possible. Anger, hatred, malice, revenge and greed should be asked to vacate the precinct of heart, and new occupants like sobriety, serenity, love, contentment, humility and toleration should be greeted and given reception.

To treat loss and gain as the two sides of a coin is the sign of detachment.

Control of thoughts, control of tongue, and control of mind is the way to placid peace and progress.

To pass sometime in seclusion every day is to get renewed strength, and spiritual vigour.

To be engaged in frivolous talk and idle chatter are the two amusements for all eminent fools.

Love and hatred are the two extreme poles. To accept the former is altruism and to reject the latter is humanism.

To be haunted by lust, greed and pride is to be in chains.

Renunciation of egoism is to seek liberation.

Recognition of the due dignity of the individual is the manifestation of the spirit of mutual love and regard.

Anger is the loss of self-control.

Anxiety is slow poisoning.

To treat fortune and misfortune as coming from the One Invisible Source, is to appreciate the Divine planning.

Affluence demands thankfulness.

Adversity calls for patience.

To treat crisis, as an opportunity, is to cash in on proven success in time of tension.

In time of need, prayer, patience and perseverance are there to help.

To perform duty in a disinterested spirit is to attract the sense of self-satisfaction.

Devotion is emancipation.

To asses and scrutinize the personal preferences, before they are accepted finally, is to take a rational view of life.

To ignore and avoid the personal prejudices is to seek safety and security.

It has been said that "Rome was not built in a day". Likewise, it can be said, that, spiritual progress is not achieved in a day. There is no need for discouragement or frustration.

Persistence pays rich dividends.

Truly speaking, we are sick persons. Spiritual health is being ignored. It is of paramount importance. Spiritual health begets mental health and mental health is conducive

to calm and serene thoughts, which give us peace and save us from confrontation, which is the result of a war being waged within us. Our conflicting desires leave no room for armistice. It is not a decisive battle.

Most of the diseases by which, we suffer, are caused by tension, anxiety, fear, and hurry and worry. They upset the whole physical system, and keep a person ever restless, with the result that, he takes recourse to sleeping pills, tranquilizers and narcotics. But, they can not give permanent relief. For permanent relief, let us resort to other treatment. It is a simple and inexpensive treatment. It is best to merge your will with the Will of God, for it is better to be a servant of God than to aspire to be a god your-self.

Regular meditation, for at least an hour a day, in a secluded, place, free from noise, is conducive to spiritual progress. It not only gives us concentration but, also, gives intuition, and also the in-valuable gift of inspiration. It end-ows us with a positive personality.

Let us, then, go to our spiritual guide once again implore him to lead, guide, teach and inspire us.

To get glory and grace give yourself to a noble cause.

To live is to love.

To exist is to hate.

Count each blessing given to you and offer thanks for the same. By offering thank, you multiply your blessings. But, not doing so, you stop the future in-inflow of bounty, grace and blessings.

Recall your short-comings and limitations, and try to make amends for the same.

Give your mind to every one but your heart to the One and only One.

Cheerfulness is the mark of spiritually advanced persons.

In order to achieve spiritualprogress, it is not enough to give heart. It will meet the demands of spiritual progress, if one may give himself up.

Supreme struggle, abounding enthusiam, infinite patience, dogged determination and sincerity of purpose are fascinating enough to attract glory and grace, leaving no scope for any alternative.

Such a role is easy enough to square with spiritual progress.

Let us be up and doing.

Let us pledge and promise to pursue with undaunted courage, infinite patience and steadfast perseverance the path of placid peace. progress, purification and perfection.

The following loving verses have recently been received by Zahurmian :

When negative thought surrounds,
Witness not my desperation.
When positive thought abounds,
Withness not my aspiration,
When nearness thought confounds,
Witness my love.

Faiz Ahmed Ferguson—London.

The Great Cure

Blinded by a great cure,
Keeping me turning
Towards you and only you.
Blinded at the cross-roads,
Which way to turn ?
Towards you and only you.
Take away this veil !
And keeping me turning
Towards you and only you.
It is the great cure;
That keeps me turning
Towards you and only you.

Javed Hever—Granada (Spain)

SPAIN

It is on the Spanish Main,
That Great Saints set foot
To travel upon lands and the high plains,
What kind of profit was their gain ?
Their giant footsteps in sands of time
Imprinted on that Spanish Main;
Ibn Arabi and Averroes soared to great heights
And, in themselves found something sublime.
An-dalucia, land of learning and light.
Where Moorish kings conquered and pradise discovered.
Treasures of Seville, Granada and Cordoba, shine bright
Who inspired them in the Greater fight ?
Travellers who follow and step out of time,
Can only wonder at there strides along the line.
When peril and danger our lives surround,
Oh Great Master ! lend us to higher ground !

Javed Hever—Granada (Spain)

Thank you for guiding, and showing me the way,
Thank you for giving me, some time in your day.

Javed Hever—Granada (spain)