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THE MARKS
OF
SPIRITUAL MATURITY



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The Marks of Spiritual Maturity

I heartily welcome you to participate in discussion and dialogue. Let us come and sit round the table, where we are not served with delicious dishes, but, where we open our heart to each other.

To understand people, one should reach them. Unless one comes in contact with people, one can not realise their hardships and their difficulties.

When we are remote, we cannot share their joys and sorrows.

A word of comfort and cheer is better in some cases than any ointment or surgery.

Let me narrate to you with a happy heart my recent visit to the West. It happened one day morning that I was at Heathrow airport with Inam Hasan. As soon as I came out, I found Ijlal Sahab, Faiz Ahmed, Ahmad Hasan, Iftikhar Khan, Mohammed Siraj and Gulnar, Sarfaraz and Jamal waiting for me.

The drive from Heathrow airport to Ijlal Sahab's house was long, but not tiresome. It took some time to reach Ijlal Sahab's house.

My first surprise at the airport was that I saw Mohammed Siraj and Gulnar there, who had reached London a day earlier from Holland.

During my stay in London, I had an opportunity to meet people, whom I had not met for sometime past. Mrs. Koops came from Rotterdam to meet me. I had not seen her for the past six years. Zeenat also came from Rotterdam. I was glad to see her after six years· I found her in good health. She appeared to be cheerful. Sufiyya came from Germany and Lisa from Austria. Qamar Uddin and Kamal found time to come to London from Italy.

Suriyya, her lovely daughter Salma and her husband Salim came from Holland. D Jorai and his son Ameer Ali also came from Holland for a brief stay.

There were others too whom I am indebted for their love and affection.

During my busy schedule in London, I tried to find time to visit the two famous centres of knowledge and learning, I mean Oxford University and Cambridge University. I also visited Blenheimn Castle. There we took tea in a restaurant. It was a memorable evening.

The visit to Hampton Court, Batanical Gardens, British Museum, Arts Gallery, Gryodon, Reading, Constable's Country, Regent park,, Big Ben, White Hall, and to Dr. Samuel Johnson's house, which was closed at that time, will ever remain memorable.

On way to Combridge, I stopped at Lavenham. It is a small town, but very compact and well-developed, providing all the civic amenities. There I was surprised to see a bookshop, which had some very good books.

I had also been to wales. This was my first visit to Wales. Wales is a picturesque country, offering natural beauty and sylvan scene.

I also visited Stratford upon Avon. There I saw some relics of William Shakespeare. Not very far from the place, where his relies are located, is the grave of Shakespeare in an old Church.

In Wales we all were staying with Shahana who lives in Builth Weles.

She is a thoughtful lady. She was ever eager and anxious to give us all the comfort.

From Builth Weles, we went further on to see water falls, hills and dales, green pastures, fauna and flowers.

By seeing : Wales, one is convinced that "God made the country and man made the town."

We also had been to Haye On the Wye. It is not very far from Builth Weles It is a small town, famous for its bookshops throughout the world.

The visit to Haye On the Wye was quite rewarding. At the entrance of one bookshop, I found a striking inscription to the effect that :—.

"The biggest second hand bookshop in the world.e

A hurried visit to Cardiff enabled us to see th' famous meuseum there and the University. There the Castle stands in pristine glory.

A visit that I cannot forget is the one to Southampton. I visited Southampton twice, When, I visited a second time, I stayed over night. Jamiluddin took us to the sea-shore, which is quite far off from his residence. I also saw his press and the room where he works.

I, also, met Jamil's mother, who lives near Hampton Court. She is now in declining years but quite robust and cheerful.

It was a great pleasure to meet Faiz's parents again after six years. Their house is their castle and their orchard is a miniature paradise for them on earth.

Sarfaraz invited us to tea at her lavishly furnished house in Reading. Mafta M. Islam and Ahmad Hasan lavishly entertained every one of us and so did M.A. Islam and Bilqis, Iftikhar Khan, Aqila, Nurrat Ahmed, Iqbal Sahab, Neema and Mrs. Wakif.

Jamil, Faiz and Ijlal Sahab were every where with me. Jamil, it seems, has now three ambitions in life, namely to have a good library, to establish a Sufi Centre and to run his press successfully.

Ijlal Sahab showed utmost concern for the comfort and happiness of every one of us.

Siraj and Gulnar came to London twice during my stay there. The second time, that they came, they had with them their eldest son Minhaj. When I saw Minhaj at the Victoria Railway Station, I was filled with joy, which I cannot describe in mere words.

I have brought with me happy memories of the days passed in England and Walles.

I think that to understand people, we should come in close contact with them.

It is through direct, close and intimate contact as well as personal meetings, that we can have greater understanding of the problems of other people as well as a profound knowledge of other people's life and living.

Our present day world has undergone a basic change. People meet more often. They seem to have identical interests.

But, inspite of all this, there is so much turmoil and tension, so much ill-feeling and misunderstanding, so much suspicion and so much hatred that life has become mosaic.

The lack of the spirit of toleration has made life intolerable.

Why is it so ? It is because people lack spiritual maturity. They may grow in years but not in wisdom. Physically, they may become adult, but, judged from the spiritual and moral point of view, they are still children, gathering not pebbles on the sea shore, but,

collecting things, which are repugnantand ugly and which can be eaten by moths, worms and insects.

People attain the age of majority on their becoming twenty one years old. So long as they are minor, they are maintained and trained by their parents. In case, the parents are dead, they are brought up by their relatives. They act as their guardian. In some cases, a guardian is appointed by a Court of Law. The Court of Law, on an application, may appoint a person as a guardian of a minor. The guardian so appointed may be of person or property or of both.

This is true of a minor, and the problem of his security, safety and well-being.

But, in the spiritual domain things are different. Barring a few persons, most of the people, to which ever religion, region, race, caste community and colour they may belong, are spiritually undeveloped. In other words, they do not have spiritual maturity.

Now, the question arises what is spiritual maturity. 'Spiritual' has been defined as of spirit as opposed to matter; holy; divine; concerned with sacred or religious things, having higher qualities of mind. Maturity has been defined as complete in natural development; with fully developed powers of body and mind.

Thus, spiritual maturity is perfect development, having the higher qualities of the mind. It is concerned with sacred or religious things.

Spiritual maturity implies adjustment with situations with courage and fortitude.

It is to fulfil the duties of every day life in a befitting manner. It is to act prudently and behave humbly

and not in a childish way. The person endowed with spiritual maturity is happy in every situation.

A spiritually immature person is engaged in self centred emotions. His approach towards situations and tests and trial is childish and negative, leading to immature re-actions with the result, that there is tention. In all situations, whether it be sorrow, financial reverses, disappointment, poverty, adversity, and domestic problems, he is in wilderness always criticising and shifting the blame.

The spiritual maturity and immaturity of a person is judged by the manner and the method, with which, he tackels the changing circumstances of life.

Spiritual maturity does not come to everyone as of right. It is to be achieved by the slow process of self-discipline, self-control and self-surrender.

The distinguishing marks of spiritual maturity do not go un-noticed. The person, gifted with spiritual has no fear and no care. Fear is opposed to the spirit of love, power, belief and faith. Fear is the result of doubt.

The spirit of fear is closely identified with the lack of faith.

Such a person does not claim to be holy, pious, or virtuous. His happiness lies in service without the hope of reward.

He loves truth and hates falsehood. He is hospitable, and courteous. He is not a miser, who invites misery. He is generous, who generates goodwill.

His heart is receptive, his faith is unshaken and his mind is stable sure, and steadfact. He is, thus, saved from saols storms, strife and struggle.

He is always happy, cheerful and contented unlike the spiritually immature person, who is morose sad, and sorry. He is always smiling. He is free from inner conflicts and tensions.

His desire is to serve. He does not want to be served.

His life is not like a barren field, where no seed is grown. He is not like a burning lamp placed at the cross-road in the broad day light, which does good to no body. He leads a useful life, guiding, teaching, inspiring and helping people.

Such a person has a sound mind in a sound body. He exhibits wonderful manifestation of the spirit of self-satisfaction, self-righteousness and self-sacrifice.

Positive approach towards the problems of life and living, tough-mindedness, optimism, constancy, firmness, patience and perseverance are the fruits of spiritual maturity.

Spiritual maturity confers upon its votaries the guidance and direction of super-human wisdom.

The spiritually mature persons are free from self-concei and pride which are the basis of mental and afflictions troubles.

Spiritual maturity manifests itself in the spirit of wisdom.

A person, endowed with spiritual maturity, has no fascination for name, fame, wealth, social position,

power and helf. He treats wealth as a thing, which he cannot take with him to the grave. He shall have to leave it behind.

It is unwise to run after fame, which is treacherous and it transitory.

Social norms and standards change very often.

Society is shallow. It does not offer sincerity. On the other hand, its professions and its claims are based on self-interest, hypocrisy and insincerity.

Triffles and delusions do not attract the spiritually mature persons. To them, pleasure and pain are meaningless conceptions.

They look at life and its problems from a disinterested point of view.

Thus relieved of inordinate desires and ignoble ambitions, they concentrate on things which really matter.

They are disciplined soldiers obeying with implicit confidcnce the dictates of Truth.

They have secured their freedom by dissociating themselves from avarice, greed, covetousness lust, pride, fear and self-conceit.

The spiritually mature person is content to have what he has. He refuses to barter or exchange his invaluable possessions for transitory things like wealth. fame, influence, and position.

His holy ambitions operate along the line of mercy, benevolence and love as apposed to earthly ambitions, which seek their own object and are, thus, motivated by selfishness.

Their joys and their ambitions seek to be a useful member of society. Their positive personality is the outcome of their positive thinking.

As a man thinks so he is.

Life is a game of cards. It is a delege and a delusion not satisfactory in its results and meaning, and giving nothing in the end. Its aims can not be termed reasonable honourable and just. Its pursuit is inglorious. Its ambitions are selfish. Its end is nothing but sad.

There are people, who work day in and day out for unworthy objects. They do not think correctly, and act logically, with the result, that they have to follow the vain course, which leads them nowherer.

As a matter of fact, present life should be treated as a schooling season, which means and implies preparation for a future life.

The spiritually mature person is fervent in spirit. He has come to realise that "love of money is the root of all evil."

He is energetic, and enthusiastic in doing all that is good, noble, true and beatiful.

What is good for others is also good for him.

He seeks grace of God, which is itself a treasure, which moth and rust can not consume. It is enduring lasting, giving eternal joy.

He does not insist on his own rights, feelings, privileges, and preferment. He wants to do his duty in a befitting manner. He respects the rights of others

and sluggishness are the outcome of spiritual degeneration, which make a person indifferent to spiritual and moral values. Such a person fails to achieve spiritual insight.

They are pre-occupied with triffies of life . As a child is happy to play with his or her toys, so they are happy with their material a equisitions. They do not teach and import truth.

To attain spiritual maturity, one should move onward and forward and not slip back. One should be ever on guard. One should impart truth to others, and should teach the truth as one knows and understands. One's own powers should not be dormant otherwise they will be atrophied. They should be used judiciously and carefully to be harnessid in service, sharing and sacrifice. If spiritual faculties liedormant and inactive they will be come dull and inactive.

Prayer, meditation, introspection society of saintly persons, positive thoughts and study of Scriptures develop the spiritual faculties.

Spiritual maturity turns weakness into strength.

One should not think himself more highly, but one should think himself more soberly.

To be meek and humble is to manifest spiritual maturity.

Where there is true love, there can be no care and fear.

Search for harmony, truth and beauty leads to peace of mind.

and gives them due recognition. He builds his character along good lines. "Live and let live" is the guiding principle of his life.

He enlarges his sympathies. He lealises his own need of mercy and hopeful correction.

His thoughts are positive, his words are regulated, his conduct is noble, and his mind is well poised and balanced.

He draws inspiration from the spirit of self-development and self-righteousness.

Spiritual maturity manifests not only power, but also love. Love is a cardinal principle for the one spiritually evolved He has love for all, malice towards none. His love is all embracing, having a broad base.

His love has lost the selfish characteristic. It is not a selfish love. It is a generous love. It is self-sacrificing love. The sheet anchor of his love is righteousness, truth, justice, mercy, benevolence, kindness and empathy.

The manner and the method, with which, a person tackles the changing circumstances of life determine his spiritual maturity and immaturity.

Spiritual maturity is not maintained automatically. There is every possibility of it relapsing into spiritual degeneration.

The possibility of degenerating into spiritual immaturity can be avoided, provided one is vigilant.

Spiritual degeneration implies a second childhood.

Spiritual degeneration deprives a person of appreciating truth, righteous life and chaste living. Dullness

Peace of mind gives life coherence and co-ordination.

The quest of social harmony is the mark of wisdom. It mitigates tension, and provides relief and a sense of security.

Emotional conflicts should be avoided.

One should do his social home work to the utmost of his capacity and to the best of his ability.

Conflicts, tensions, acrimonious debates and dialogues, and differences of the past be allowed to remain in the past. They need not be dragged and taken on into the present.

Emotional integrigy should remain firm and unshaken.

Hatred and ill-will add new dimensions to human worries.

The forces of social justice should be allowed to operate without let or hindrance.

Ideals and ideology should not have any of monoply of social concerns. They should be in confirmity with the good of all.

The people devoid of spiritual maturity find it difficult to stand on their own feet. They walk on clutches, which are not to be relied upon.

Spiritual maturity is a power to be reckoned with.

Spiritual maturity is a safe guide leading to the way that is straight.

The following verses have been received by Zahur Mian—

"Every moment our tongue speaks many words,
In reality it wants to say your name only,
Every moment the mind has a thousand thoughts,
In reality it wants to think of you only.
Every moment many loves pass through the heart,
In reality it wants to be a home for your love only.
Every moment there are a thousand pitfalls on the way.
In reality your helpful hand draws us to Reality."

* * *

What will this summer journey bring,
A poem of peace, a song to sing ?
A sphere of warmth, of love around,
The grace of light, a feeling sound ?
But what to do with sighs, with dread,
While pangs of separation spread ?
For sure the blooming of the spring.
In holding winter's forboding.
Remember, what poets said,
Of love and pains, of loss and gain.
What made them uuderstand and know,
Not but theroe, the thorn also.

(Gulnar – Holland)