



# Personality of Jesus

Abraham Maslow and Milton Mayor, two renowned psychologists initiated a research to find out the most illustrious personality from among great leaders of history. After a long research and serious study they did arrive at the conclusion that Jesus Christ born in Bethlehem in Judea and grew up in the village of Nazareth, who lived but for 33 years and died on the cross is the most distinguished person who has been influencing the world. He brought out visible changes in the world! That was a remarkable revelation that Jesus was the most influential individual! History shows that no other individual exercised such profound influence, as Jesus did. So it is advantageous for us that we learn the exceptional personality traits of Jesus who had touched the lives of millions of people in the world.

### **Jesus in the Gospels**

The Gospel is the authentic source to know about the personality of Jesus. The four Gospels mainly depict the personality, the teachings and the mission of Jesus. All the four Gospels in the New Testament draw Jesus' personality in their own words and deeds. So we can say the Gospels reflect the real personality of Jesus. A comprehensive study of the Gospels will facilitate us to understand certain unique traits of Jesus' personality.

### **The Beloved Son of the Father**

The Father-Son relationship of Jesus is the very foundation of his personality. The constant awareness that he is the Son of God has transformed Jesus' life. At the time of baptism and transfiguration, God the Father revealed and confirmed that Jesus was his beloved Son. Jesus was ever conscious that he came to fulfill a mission entrusted by God the Father. So, he was in constant touch with the Father through prayer (Jn 4, 34; 5, 24). We too are destined to be God's children in Jesus and we shall grow in this awareness daily by conforming ourselves to the heart of Jesus. Jesus' consciousness of divine Sonship affected his life, words and deeds always. His sense of mission was very high. We too are called to be God's children through Christ.

## **Jesus the Absolute Redeemer**

The very purpose of the incarnation of Jesus was to offer total redemption of the world. So he started his mission by announcing the Good News of integral liberation. We shall call to mind Jesus announcing this mission in the synagogue, “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor” (Luke 4: 18-19).

Human personality has three different spheres: bodily, mental and spiritual. On the physiological level, our human body is a wonderful gift from God. Its shape, colour, size, height etc. influence the personality developments. Yet personality doesn't remain on these factors only. The second sphere includes in-born talents perfected by dint of practice. The third sphere is entirely based on human values. This is the spiritual realm of the personality. These three aspects are closely interrelated: whatever affects the mind affects the body and soul and *vice versa*! When a man commits sin it disturbs the soul, the mind and the body of man. The purpose of incarnation of the Son God is to free man from this disintegrating disturbance. The freedom and redemption offered by Jesus is complete and wholesome. He offers salvation through forgiveness of sins. The path Jesus pursued was different and difficult – the way of the cross! While the world resorts to crime and violence to settle problems, taunting the Cross as mere folly and scandal, Jesus' sacrifice on the Cross fetched us salvation and freedom from the clutches of sin. Today, each and every human being who accepts Jesus as the Savior stands redeemed. Let us make ourselves worthy to enjoy the integral freedom and salvation offered by Jesus.

## **Jesus the Friend of Sinners**

Jesus was born at Nazareth in the family of David, the Jewish race, who considered themselves as God's own chosen people. The sinners and tax collectors were looked down by the orthodox Jews. Any interaction or association with them was unthinkable for the Orthodox Jews. But Jesus was very sympathetic towards sinners and outcasts. He did not hesitate to criticize the Jews who were pretentious. The Gospel presents a glowing picture of Jesus, who stands tall as the friend of sinners. He sits at the table with the sinners and tax collectors (Mark 2. 16, Luke 15, 1-2). Jesus teaches us about the unfailing love of God in the story of the prodigal son. The sinner-woman who washed his feet and wiped them with her flossy hair was pardoned of her sins though the Jews brought her as a sinner (Luke 7, 36-50). The tax collector Levi, who was considered as a man of extortion, was offered love and friendship (Lk 5, 27-32). Jesus once publicly declared that “I have come to call not the righteous but sinners to repentance” (Lk 5, 32). This attitude of Jesus towards the sinners by offering pardon and salvation is a unique trait of Jesus' personality. His actions and attitudes are motivated by his unconditional love.

## **Jesus, a Strong Witness to Truth**

Jesus came into this world to bear witness and testify to God's love and truthfulness. He revealed that God is truth itself. He said, “For this I was born, and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth” (Jn 18, 37). Jesus is the one who revealed God as truth. Jesus said, “I am the

way, and the truth and the life” (Jn 14, 6). Jesus, the incarnation of truth itself, lived, died and resurrected to testify to this truth. During the trial of Jesus, Pilate the governor asked Jesus what truth was. Jesus refused a direct answer because he had said several times that he came to bear witness to the truth. Jesus said, “If you continue in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free” (Jn 8, 31 -32).

Jesus acknowledged and valued veracity in life. He hated hypocrisy. He said, “Let your word be ‘Yes, Yes’ or ‘No, No’; anything more than this comes from the evil one” (Mt 5, 37). May Jesus inspire us to lead a genuine Christian life by cultivating respect for truth in daily lives!

### **Jesus who fought against the Forces of Evil**

Jesus condemned sin and evil forces. In his fight against sin and evil he did not yield to the temptations of the world. He taught us that those who didn't submit to the forces of sin would succeed in life and enjoy lasting peace of mind.

Jesus lived at a time when social evils such as, violence, injustice, exploitation, were rampant in the society. Even in Jerusalem, which was the hub of Jewish religious life, one could find all kinds of nefarious forces quite active. They made the temple itself a center of trade and used it to exploit people who came to worship and offer prayers. We read in the gospel of Luke the event of Jesus driving out business people from the temple (Lk 19, 45-48). Jesus was caustically critical of those who abused power and position. They were misinterpreting the laws and forcibly implicating the people for selfish ends. Jesus taught that laws and regulations were to serve people and their welfare (Mt 23, 1-36; Lk 11, 39-47; Mark 12, 38-40). Jesus said, “You impose on people burdens hard to carry but yourself do not lift one finger to touch them.”

Jesus spoke against all kinds of evil forces and exposed the bogus attitude of the so called lawyers (Lk 20, 45-47). Jesus wanted to ensure dignity for the downtrodden and weaker sections on the society. We shall not forget that Jesus seldom denounced the sinners while fighting against the evil forces. Jesus taught us to love the enemies, to do good to those who hate us and to bless those who curse us (Lk 6, 27-36; Mt 5, 38-42).

### **Jesus, the Friend of the Poor**

Jesus was poor throughout his life and remained to be so from the manger to the Calvary. In a world where even the foxes have their dens and birds their nests, Jesus did not have a place of his own to lay his head. Jesus opted to live his life poor. He was not attracted to wealth of any kind. He valued poverty in spirit and warned those who repose their trust only in the perishable things of this world and the indiscrete use of the same. Those who hold on to the treasures of the world will find it difficult to enter into the kingdom of God (Mark 10, 17-25; Mt 19, 16-30). It is our attitude to wealth that matters. Right attitude to wealth forms one of the central points of Jesus' teachings. Jesus appreciated the small, insignificant coin offered by the widow, because it was all that she had for her living (Lk 21, 1-4).

### **Jesus Meek and Humble of Heart**

Jesus said, “Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls” (Mt. 11:29). These words demonstrate two important

aspects of Jesus' personality - his gentleness and his humility! Jesus wants his followers to imbibe the same. In the words of Isaiah Jesus is the Lamb of God: "Like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and like a sheep that before its shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth" (Is. 53, 7). Jesus is a sublime model for us to be followed. He kept his poise during the trial and on his difficult journey to Calvary. Jesus washing the feet of his disciples is an exceptional example of humility. He told his disciples, "If I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet" (Jn 13, 14). He taught us to follow the path of humble service, "Whoever wants to be first must be last of all and servant of all" (Mk 9, 35). When Jesus noticed the invited guests at a feast claiming the prominent places of honour he reminded, "For all who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted" (Lk 14, 7-11). These will remain as perennial teachings and examples of Jesus to the world. We too ought to practice the virtues of gentleness and humility after the model of Jesus. Humility is the queen of virtues and he who digs deepest builds the safest (Cf. Mt 6, 41).

### **Forgiving Jesus**

Forgiveness has a seductive appeal to the minds of all and it inspires us to pursue a path of abiding happiness. Forgiveness is a quality shining forth in the person of Jesus. He forgives others and asks us to follow the same. Even at the point of his death Jesus prayed to the Father to forgive those who persecuted and crucified him. This is the most unique and sublime example with a difference. Jesus teaches us to forgive those who do wrong. To a question posed by Peter as to how many times we must forgive those who offend us, Jesus replied, "Not seven times, but, I tell you, seventy-seven times" (Mt 18, 22). Jesus puts a precondition for an offering to be genuine: "Whenever you stand praying, forgive, if you have anything against anyone; so that your Father in heaven may also forgive you your trespasses" (Mk 11, 25). St Paul exhorts us on the need of practicing the virtue of forgiveness, after the heart of Jesus. The grace of forgiveness has the power to heal: "Bear with one another and, if anyone has a complaint against another, forgive each other; Just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive" (Col 3, 13). Jesus teaches us to extend unconditional forgiveness to anyone who offends us (Mk 11, 25). Let the example and teachings of Jesus on the virtue of forgiveness be a lamp to our feet lighting up the dark and stormy situations of our lives. Jesus demonstrated that forgiveness was an absolute necessity to heal the paralytic. Jesus commands, "Son, your sins are forgiven" (Mt 9, 1-8; Lk 5:20, Mark 2, 5).

### **The Merciful Jesus**

"Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy" (Mt 5, 7). This is the virtue that understands passion with compassion. The virtue of mercifulness is another glittering gem in Jesus' character. The gospels depict Jesus showing great sympathy and mercifulness to the sinners, the poor, the sick, the persecuted and the helpless. All the gospels narrate the story of the woman caught up in adultery and the kind manner Jesus treated the matter. It really touches our hearts when we see Jesus moved to tears with Martha and Mary at the death of Lazarus. Jesus' sensibility and empathetic attitude to those who were suffering have attracted many people to Him. Jesus is the towering example of sympathy! We read the examples of Jesus feeding the hungry, healing the sick, pardoning the sinners and consoling the suffering. Jesus is the Good

Samaritan who came to rescue the wounded (Lk 10, 29-37). We have the example of the compassionate Jesus in John 8, 1, and pardoning the sinful woman in Luke 7, 36-50. Here we can see as the epitome of mercifulness in Jesus. Jesus tells us to "Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful" (Lk 6, 36). We had only a few glimpses into the personality-traits of Jesus. Anyone who has a fleeting acquaintance with Jesus will be impressed by his qualities like sympathy, sensitivity, and humanness. The imposing personality of Jesus stands high and alone as a beacon and as a challenge to those living in a world of sin, hatred, vengeance, and retaliation. Let us not rest until these qualities of Jesus are made our own. "What does the LORD require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?" (Micah 6:8).

### **I. Let us Discuss**

1. Jesus has the greatest influence on people and cultures of the world.
2. Which trait in Jesus' character attracted you the most?

### **II. Let us find out the Answers**

1. What are the traits of Jesus' personality that are revealed in the four gospels?
2. What do you mean as you say, Jesus is an out and out liberator?
3. Jesus is the new face who stood firm against all kinds of evil forces. Explain.
4. How can we follow Jesus in the practice of the virtues like meekness and humility?
5. Everyone is impressed by Jesus' act of mercy. Explain?

### **III. Activity**

1. Prepare a chart designating different personality traits of Jesus and discuss the same in your class.

### **IV. Let us Read and Reflect**

1. Philippians 2, 1-11.