

Some Rules of attaining Spiritual Perfection

To be able to pass all the stages of spiritual path successfully it is necessary for the spiritual traveler to observe certain rules:

1) Renunciation of customs and social formalities. It means to refrain from all those formalities which are related to mere customs or stylish living and which are a hindrance in the way of the spiritual traveler, who is required to live among the people but to lead a simple and balanced life. Some people are so absorbed in social formalities that they always observe them too minutely in order to maintain their position in society. Their criterion for judging what is proper and what is improper is the appreciation and disapproval of the common people. They do not have any opinion of their own, and simply follow the common trend. At the other end there are some other people who lead an isolated life and ignore all rules of society and thus deprive themselves from all social benefits. They do not mix with other people and come to be known as cynics. To be successful in his objective the spiritual traveler should follow the middle way. He should mix up with the people neither too much nor too little. It does not matter if he looked different from other people because of his distinct social behavior.

2) Determination. As soon as the spiritual traveler begins his spiritual exercises, he is bound to face many unpleasant events. He is criticized by his friends and acquaintances who are interested only in their selfish desires and current social customs. They taunt and unbraid the spiritual traveler in order to bring a change in his behavior and to turn him away from his objective. When these worldly people find that the spiritual traveler has a new style of life and his ways and manners have become different from their own, they feel upset and try their best to remove him by means of mockery and taunt from the line recently chosen by him. Thus, at every stage of his spiritual journey the devotee has to face fresh difficulties which he can resolve only by means of his determination, perseverance, will power and trust in Allah. ***Let the believers place their trust in Allah. (Surah Ali Imran, 3:122)***

3) Moderation. It is one of those important principles which the spiritual traveler must follow, for a little negligence in this respect not only hampers his progress, but often as a consequence of a lack of attention to this principle he may get tired of the spiritual journey itself. In the beginning the spiritual traveler may show much zeal and fervor. In the middle he may see wonderful manifestations of Divine light, and consequently may decide to spend most of his time in acts of worship and make himself busy with prayer, bewailing and weeping. Thus he may try to undertake everything good and pick up a morsel of every spiritual dish. But this practice is not only not beneficial but is also in many cases definitely harmful. Under too much pressure he may get fed up, leave the work incomplete and cease to take interest in commendable acts. Too much enthusiasm in the beginning leads to too little interest in the end. Therefore, the spiritual traveler should not be misled by momentary zeal and keeping in view his personal circumstances should shoulder only as much burden, or even less, as he is sure to be able to carry permanently maintaining due interest in it.

4) Continuation (Persistence). By means of continuous practice the spiritual traveler should imprint on his mind an abstract figure of each act of worship he performs, so that his practice of it may turn into a permanent habit. He should perform each deed again and again and should not give it up till he begins to take delight in its performance. He cannot capture the permanent angelic aspect of a deed

unless he continues to perform for quite a long time so that its impression on his mind may become indelible. For this purpose, he should choose a deed consistent with his inclination and aptitude and then continue to perform it, for if a deed was abandoned prematurely, not only its good effects would be obliterated, but a reaction also would begin to appear. As a good deed is luminous, the reaction of its abandonment involves darkness and evil.

5) Meditation. Meditation or contemplation is very vast in its meaning and its sense differs according to the degrees and stages of the spiritual journey. In the beginning it means refraining from all acts not useful in this world or the hereafter and abstaining from saying or doing anything disliked by Allah. Gradually this meditation becomes stiffer and higher, and may sometimes mean concentration on one's silence, or on one's self or on a higher truth, that is the names and the attributes of Allah. The degrees and grades of this kind of meditation will be mentioned later.

Here it may be mentioned that meditation is an important factor in spiritual journey. The leading gnostics have laid great stress on it and have described it as the foundation stone of spiritual journey on which the edifice of remembrance and recollection of Allah rests. Without meditation remembrance and recollection of Allah are not likely to produce any positive results. For a spiritual traveler meditation is as important as for a patient the prescribed course of diet, without which the medicines may be ineffective or may even produce counter-effects. That is why the most outstanding spiritual guides do not allow any liturgies and recollection of Allah without meditation.

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