

GENERAL RULES

According to Spiritual Journalist – **Shaykh Najm al-Din Kubra**, this journey towards Allah requires observance of certain rules, some of which are related to the outward and certain others to the inward.

The OUTWARD rules are ten and as follows:-

The FIRST principle is that the journalist should give up material possessions and means and detach himself from worldly engagements. He should serve Allah alone.

The SECOND principle consists of seclusion and detachment from people, especially from everyone who hinders one from approaching God.

The THIRD principle is that the wayfarer should protect his bodily organs from what is abominable to his Lord, Master and Creator, Allah. Some Scholars have said to an extent,

One's speech should be in remembrance of God, one's silence should be an effort to contemplate, and one's looking at things should be for deriving a lesson.

The wayfarer should also protect his stomach from unlawful and suspect foods and drinks; and in the case of lawful things, he should not consume greedily, lustfully in a state of being oblivious of God; rather, while eating food he should be awake and aware of God's presence. In the same way, he should protect his feet and hands as well as his sexual organs from what is unlawful and abominable.

The FOURTH principle is to fight against one's urges in desiring good food, good drink, good clothing, and sensuous acts.

The FIFTH principle is to seek out a wise leader so one can guide himself or herself on the path of attaining perfection. The wayfarer would be unaware of so many things – thoughts and actions, which might hinder progress towards spiritual perfection, and even if he were aware, he would not know how to cure these problems.

The SIXTH principle is to make certain that all obligatory acts in Islam, and as set by Allah are done and on its time, and one hardly focuses on the recommended and leaves out the obligatory. It is said that *remembrance of Allah is the key to the hidden world and the lamp of the inner world. Without this key, one cannot enter a house and without a lamp, a dark house is not illuminated. Hence, we remember God in the way a lover remembers his beloved, and the remembrance must never leave him.*

The SEVENTH principle is to keep constant fast, for this act signifies opposition to and suppression of the carnal self, which is the root cause of all evil.

The EIGHTH principle is cleanliness, and taking care of bodily cleanness. Cleanness is the weapon of a believer and it evokes inner enlightenment. The Prophet (S) said,

Wudhu (ablution) performed on Wudhu shall be as light upon light on
The Judgment Day.

The NINTH principle is to stay awake, keep vigil in nights, and perform the nightly prayer and supplications.

The TENTH and last principle for the journalist is that he should work hard and struggle to get lawful means of livelihood and earn in a lawful manner.

The scholar (al-Amini) who has reached such higher stages of Spiritual Perfection says,

Moreover, The Prophet (S) said, "After the obligatory duties, it is obligatory to seek lawful livelihood"; that is, after the duty of faith it is the most obligatory of one's obligations. The lawful earning makes the inner being illuminated and unlawful earning darkens the heart.

The 'Urafa (people of higher level of understanding) have said, whoever is nourished by lawfully earned things for forty days, God will illuminate his heart. In case the lawful is not available due to the prevailing dubious character of that which is earned, he should eat that which is less susceptible to doubt, and that too is to be taken according to one's minimum necessity and not to one's need and satiation. If the seeker acts with negligence in this regard, he will not be in a position to benefit from the fruits of the tree of Gnosticism.

The author of the treatise (may God have mercy upon him) says, a disciple should not, even in the days of hardship and need, take even a grain of sesame that is doubtful, to say nothing of taking such a thing during normal and easier circumstances. The root cause of corruption of the world's people is their carelessness regarding this matter, as well as their lack of abstinence from unlawful and doubtful food. The Messenger of God (S) said, "The criteria of religion are piety and fear of God, and faith is corrupted because of greediness."

The INWARD ten rules are as follows:-

FIRST is keeping watch over the self (Nafs). That is, the wayfarer should always keep vigil over his heart. He should not neglect it even for a moment, for otherwise he would succumb to his carnal desires and satanic temptations. He should consider himself as being watched by God, as He has said,

...Surely, Allah has been a watcher over you.
(Qur'an – Chapter 4, Verse 1)

The Prophet (S) said,

God watches your heart and acts, not your apparent behavior and worldly belongings.

SECOND is the expression of humility, poverty and abasement before The Lord of The World. Ba Yazid (may Allah hallow his mighty soul) said that a voice called me from within and said,

"O' Ba Yazid! There are many servants in Our Service. So if you seek Us, bring humility and neediness."

Ba Yazid further said,

"You know for certain that you are in a crying need of your Lord at every hour on many counts; so you are needful of His Guiding Light as well as His Merciful Glance, Guidance and His Sustenance at every moment. Moreover, you are in need of Him at the time of death so that The Light of Islam and its knowledge are intact in your heart.

In the grave, too, you are in need of Him so that you successfully answer the questions asked by Nakir and Munkar. It is He Who will be your friend in the terrors of the grave. The greatest of all of your needs is your dependence on Him in The Day of Judgement, The Day of Regret and Remorse. This is so that God, The Exalted, may make your face luminous, conceal your blemishes (with His Mercy) and enhance the weight and worth of your good works in His Balance (Mizan). This is also because He may facilitate the clearance of your account and put the book of your deeds in your right hand, that He may keep you firm on The Path and save you from Hell-Fire and lead you towards paradise. His highest generosity and the most excellent favor is to bless you with His beatific vision."

These are your essential needs with regard to your Master in this world and the other world. Hence, your expression of poverty and humility before God should be according to your real poverty and need.

The THIRD principle is repentance and penitence before God, in all conditions of hardship and affluence, comfort and calamity. Referring to The Prophet Suleiman (AS), God said, "He was a good servant, because he was penitent." God said the same thing about the Prophet Ayub (AS). Prophet Suleiman (AS) saw his Benefactor in His bounties and Prophet Ayub (AS) saw The One who tries in His Trials. Neither did the bounties enjoyed by the former blur his vision of The Provider, nor the hardship or tribulations of the latter veil his sight from seeing The Hand of their Sender. In both the cases, they attributed all that happened to The Lord.

The FOURTH principle is surrender to The Command of God, The Exalted. Taslim means to surrender to God both with the heart and the body, both of which are under His ownership. To surrender a property to its owner is an essential condition (of submission). The owner has the right to control his property and dispose it in any way He deems proper. It is up to Him whether He honors or disgraces His slave, breathes life in him or kills him, causes sickness or bestows health on him, makes him rich or poor. Hence, it is required of a wayfarer not to raise any objection against His Will. He should not complain overtly or covertly, for the protest against the real owner is absurd and in violation of all norms. Complaint against The Lord by someone who claims to be his slave and lover is a shortcoming in one's love, servitude and devotion.

The FIFTH principle is Ridha (Acquiescence), i.e. accepting Divine Dispensations without questioning though they be bitter. The common believers take recourse in patience when a calamity befalls. However, the state of the elect in a similar situation is that of Ridha.

The difference between Sabr and Ridha is that the patient person, by virtue of his faith, faces calamity with forbearance; his faith remains unshaken and he does not get disturbed in times of calamity; he will not deviate from the path of servitude, howsoever great and unbearable the calamity should be but his heart resents the calamity. However, the acquiescent person (Radhi) is the one whose heart is always in the state of acquiescence and happiness. Calamity and affluence do not affect him, for whatever he receives (from God); he considers it as a gift from a friend. He enjoys hardships inflicted upon him by his Beloved and Friend with the same pleasure as others enjoy favors.

The SIXTH principle is permanent grief (Huzn). The Prophet (S) said, "God loves every grieving heart." Regarding The Prophet's attributes, he was always in the state of contemplation and grief. According to the people of higher understanding, every heart, which is devoid of grief, is nothing but clay. How can a believer manage to be cheerful while he does not know what was written by the pen of pre-eternity about his fate, whether it is felicity or wretchedness.

In addition, he is unaware of his end, for he does not know what he will earn tomorrow (in the way of virtue or vice). He does not know whether God will accept his obedience or not, and whether his sins pardoned or not.

Shaykh Abul-Hasan al-Kharqani was among the people of grief. One day he was asked the reason of the grief of the great mystics. He replied that the reason is that they want to know God, as He deserves to be known. That is impossible. No one can know God, as He deserves to be known.

The SEVENTH principle is to have good faith in God, The Exalted. In addition, He said in a sacred tradition (Hadith al-Qudsi)

I treat My servant in accordance with his opinion of Me, so let him have whatever opinion he has.

Therefore, it is necessary for a servant of God to have good faith in God or a favorable opinion of Him. One reaches this sacred state because of discerning The Attributes of Beauty of God, comprising Generosity, Mercifulness, Magnanimity, and the vastness of His Forgiveness. Whoever mistrusts God or has an unfavorable opinion of his Lord and loses hope in His Mercy, he considers his vices and sins bigger than the capacity of God's Generosity and Mercy, these amounts to ascribing defect and shortcoming to God.

The EIGHTH rule is that one should not consider himself of herself out of reach of God's Devising. As God has said,

Are they then secure from Allah's scheme? None deem himself secure from Allah's scheme save the losers.
(Qur'an – Chapter 7, Verse 99)

Further, He has said,

The erudite among His bondmen only fear Allah....
(Qur'an – Chapter 35, Verse 28)

This fear and awe is produced in one who contemplates God's attributes of Magnificence and Wrath. For, in the same way as God is attributed with the qualities of Generosity and Mercifulness, He is attributed with Wrathfulness and Power as well. God, The Exalted, has said,

Surely, I shall fill The Hell with the Jinn and Humankind together.
(Qur'an – Chapter 11, Verse 119)

It is said in a tradition that God, The Exalted, will say to Adam (A): "Arise and throw them into The Hell-Fire!" Adam will ask, "How many?" The reply would be, "Nine-hundred-and-ninety out of every thousand". Then how can a slave with his burden of sins avoid being fearsome of Divine Wrath and Might after having been aware of it?

The NINTH principle is love. In this regard, God has said,

...He loves them, and they love Him...
(Qur'an – Chapter 5, Verse 54)

Love is the essence of all stations and by means of which the slave of God progresses toward The Lord of The Heaven and The Earth, and by virtue of which he will attain to the higher degrees of the journey. Love is the fruit of the knowledge of The Beautiful Names of God. No one possesses beauty (which is his own) in the world except God. Whatever beauty and perfection is seen in the creatures is, in fact, a particle of the sun of His Beauty, a drop from the oceans of His Perfection.

If you consider beauty and perfection confined to material forms and worldly things, know that you are imprisoned within the world of (corporeal) form and deprived of observing the reality. For, the real beauty and rational perfection are found in the essence of a being that possesses power and life, has the attributes of generosity, benevolence, forbearance, and is devoid of any shortcoming and defect. It is due to this reason that all love the generous, the noble, and the wise.

Similarly, the warrior and the courageous are loved due to their might, and the learned and the pious are respected due to their honesty and purity. You know that each one of these attributes of glory and beauty are inherent in The Divine Essence, which possesses them infinitely and eternally. However, beings other than God possess a beauty and perfection that is limited, reckonable, accidental, finite and mortal. Even such attributes are borrowed from The Divine Ocean of Bounty and Beneficence. Hence, none except God deserves to be loved in the real sense, for every form of beauty is derived from Him. Therefore, everyone who loves something other than God is surely blind to The Beauty of God.

The TENTH principle is to give up reliance on one's will and freedom and to take up trust in The Omnipotent Lord of The World. God has said,

Allah coins a similitude: (on the one hand) a slave who has control of nothing, and (on the other hand) one on whom We have bestowed a fair provision from Us, and he spends them secretly and openly. Are they equal?
(Qur'an – Chapter 16, Verse 75)

Therefore, a slave has nothing to do with freedom, for freedom suits those who are free. In addition, the 'Urafa have said, if a seeker has a single desire, it means that his vision is obstructed by veils. They have also said that this (desire) is the greatest of veils. Hence, even the desire of union with God is the darkest of all veils. So when even the desire of proximity to God is considered the greatest veil, what is to be said about the condition of one who is plunged in sensual desires and mundane enticements? Thus, it is essential for a seeker to be like the corpse in the hands of the bathers, so that he may attain communion with The Truth.

Every desire takes one away from God.

The above-mentioned principles are most important for inner perfection with which a Salik (spiritual traveler) should adorn his self (Nafs) in order to be admitted-into the proximity of God. Otherwise, his sincerity and aspiration will be deemed false; his love will be merely a false claim, though he may consider himself as a wayfarer towards God, in reality he is plunged in the dungeons of sensuality.