

Twenty-Fifth Rule

OBSTACLES

According to scholars who have attained the higher levels of Spiritual Perfection, a devotee has to encounter plenty of obstacles in his path and must struggle to remove them; otherwise, he would never be able to reach his desired destination. In addition, Shaytan, The Accursed is our main obstacle.

Haji Imam Quli Nakhjawani was the teacher in Gnosis of Agha Sayyid Husayn Agha Qazi, the father of the late Agha Mirza Ali Qazi. He completed his training in morality and gnosis at the hands of Sayyid Quraysh Qazwini. He says that when he got aged, one day he saw that he and Satan were standing on the top of a hill. He passed his hand on his beard and said to Satan,

"Now I am an old man please spare me if you can." Satan said: "Look this side." Sayyid Qazwini says that when he looked that side, he saw a ditch so deep that it sent a cold wave into his spine. Pointing to that ditch Satan said: "I have no sympathy or mercy for anybody. If I could lay my hands on you once, you would fall into the bottom of this ditch from which you would never have an escape."

Incompetence

According to al-Amini, The greatest obstacle in this journey and the end-result of attaining God's Nearness is the incompetence of his self. He says that *a heart contaminated and darkened by sinning cannot become a center for the illumination of Divine light. The heart of a sinner is an inverted heart, which forces him to move in the wrong direction. Then how could he move in the direction of God's Nearness and could accept God's blessings and favors?*

Worldly Attachments

Another obstacle is the attachment and love to worldly allurements such as desire of wealth and property, love of wife and children, which would prevent us from migration towards God-Almighty.

The Prophet (S) has said,

The first thing through which transgression against God-Almighty was done consisted of six characteristics: Love of world, love of position, love of women, love of eating, love of sleeping, and love of comforts.

Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 73, page 94

Obedience of Passions

The Third obstacle is surrender to selfish whims, passions and carnal desire for they continuously pull the heart from one direction to another one, thus, never allowing a person the opportunity to have a union with God-Almighty.

The Commander of the Faithful Imam Ali (As) said:

The most brave person is the one who could dominate over the passions of his self.

Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 70, page 76

Overeating

Being a slave of the stomach and what one ingests is yet another obstacle. al-Amini says,

A person who strives day and night to arrange good and delicious food and fills his belly with different sorts of tasty foods, how could such a person have union with God-Almighty, develop affection, and establish secret communications with Him? With a stomach full of food how one could have a mood for worshipping and supplication? Some one who considers pleasure simply in eating and drinking, when would he taste the sweetness of supplication with God-Almighty? It is because of these considerations that overeating has been condemned in Islam.

Imam al-Sadiq (AS) said to Abu-Basir:

Stomach transgresses under the influence of over-eating. The most nearest situation between The God-Almighty and his servant is, when the stomach is empty and the worst situation is, when his stomach is full.

Wasail al-Shi'a, vol. 16, page 405

For the heart of a believer there is nothing worse than over-eating, because it will cause hard-heartedness and seduction, while hunger happens to be the most delicious disk for a believer's soul and heart, and health for his body.

al-Mustadarak, vol. 3, page 80

The Commander of The Faithful Imam Ali (AS) has said,

When God-Almighty intends to reform the believer's affair, He bestows upon him three blessings: less sleep, less appetite, and less speech.

al-Mustadarak, vol. 3 page 81

Hunger is the best help for controlling self and breaking up chronic habits.

al-Mustadarak, vol. 3 page 81

Unnecessary Talks

Unnecessary conversations is another obstacle, which makes it difficult to move towards the desired goal of spiritual perfection. God-Almighty has bestowed upon him the power of speech in order to fulfill his genuine needs. Excessive talking has the ability to produce – in the person – scattered and disturbed, and therefore cannot pay attention towards God-Almighty. The Prophet (S) had said,

Avoid speaking too much except while reciting invocations for God-Almighty, because, utterance of too many words other than God's Remembrance causes hard-heartedness and the most distant apart people from the God-Almighty are the people with darkened heart.

Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 71, page 281

The Prophet (S) said to Abu Dhar,

I recommend you to practice silence, because it would keep Satan away from you. It helps a lot for the protection of your religion.

Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 71, page 279

Allamah Taba Tabai (AR) says, *I have witnessed the most precious effects of silence. Practice silence for forty days and nights speaking only when it is required, remaining engaged in meditations and invocations until attaining purity and enlightenment.*

Love for Self

Love for self is another huge obstacle that requires constant attention – because Love for Allah has to supercede our love for ourselves. Pride, Riya and Ujb are all the result of loving ourselves and committing acts of worship to attract the attention of other humans.

Indecisiveness

Indecisiveness and lack of determination is an obstacle, which prevents a person from starting his deeds. As we know, Satan and the carnal self in the beginning try their best to show and prove to one that such perfection is insignificant and unnecessary.

I forgot all that is fair and foul in the world and thought the sweet and bitter events equal. I withdrew from social contact with any except scholars; I cut back food and sleep and life's other necessities to the bare minimum and devoted the rest of my time and resources to scholarship and research. I would often spend the night in study until sunrise (especially in spring and summer), and I would always research the next day's lesson in advance, making whatever exertions were called for to solve any problem that arose so that by class time I would already have a clear understanding of the Professor's topic.

Allamah S.M. H. Taba Tabai, Islamic Teachings, page 14