

25 Steps to a Successful Spiritual Journey

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

Saalik – is the traveler, you and I working towards purification ...

Sulook – the spiritual journey towards purifying our worship, servitude and conduct.

Mentors have mentioned Different methods in this Spiritual Journey and Conduct.

To seek the nearness of Allah, the Almighty, he mentions 4 horizons of paramount importance. Each of the horizons has three stages, and after passing all 12 stages, the **سالك الى الله** arrives at the Aalam of Khuloos-the existence of Khuloos.

1. اسلام Islam
2. ايمان Iman
3. هجرت Hijrat
4. جهاد Jihad

1. Stage **اسلام اصغر** Minor Islam, admitting the Shahdatayn and acknowledging it.
2. Stage **ايمان اصغر** certifying it heartily, to be faithful to all Islamic teachings from within.
3. Stage **اسلام اكبر** the Major Islam. And that is to submit to all Islamic teachings, command and forbidding.
4. Stage **ايمان اكبر** i.e. the essence and the meaning of Islam akbar extends and transforms to obedience with contentment and enthusiasm.
5. Stage It is the **هجرت صغرى** minor hijrat and that is shifting from «دارالكفر» to «دارالاسلام» like the immigration, shifting of the Muslims from Makkah to Madina. Makkah at that time was the centre of Kufr.
6. Stage The major hijrat **هجرت كبرى**. Shifting, migration from the sinners, wrong doers, acquaintances and being with the bad and the oppressors.
7. Stage The major struggle **جهاد اكبر**. It is combat with the forces of Shaitan with help and assistance from the forces of Rahman i.e. aql.
8. Stage Victory over the forces of Shaitan. Freeing and fleeing from their domination and exiting from the world of ignorance and matter.

25 Steps to a Successful Spiritual Journey

- 9. Stage** **اسلام اعظم** the grand Islam. It is to overcome the forces of lust and long hopes which after the victory of the awakening elements in the exterior over the deviant elements from within. And it is here that the heart becomes the centre of the Divine enlightenment.
- 10. Stage** **ایمان اعظم** the grand Iman. And that is to see one's true non-existence and ones fanaa before the Almighty God. And entering the world of **فَادْخُلِي فِي عِبَادِي وَادْخُلِي جَنَّتِي** Then enter among My servants, and enter My paradise!' and it is here the true worship and servitude can be seen.
- 11. Stage** **هجرة عظمى** the grand immigration and that is migrating from oneself, forgetting oneself and travelling to the world of the ultimate existence and having total attention to His pure existence which has been mentioned in **وَادْخُلِي جَنَّتِي**.
- 12. Stage** **جهاد اعظم** that is after migrating from oneself, he seeks the All Pure existence of the Almighty God until all signs of seeing oneself are totally destroyed and he steps in the world of the Ultimate Tawhid.

After passing these 12 stations, the saalik arrives at the horizons of Khuloos and becomes an applicable of this ayat

بَلْ أَحْيَاءٌ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِمْ يُرْزَقُونَ

No, they are living and provided for near their Lord, 3:169

25 Steps to a Successful Spiritual Journey

After knowing and believing in the fundamentals of the religion and complete acquaintance with the furoo' i.e. Islam and its laws.

Allama Bahrul Uloom (ra) mentions the following steps to this spiritual travel, to seek the nearness of the Almighty Allah.

- Step 1)** Put aside all habits and customs that digress from the path and make one drown in all impurities.
- Step 2)** Be determined to be on the path-see Divine help so not to have either a spot of fear or a speck of doubt.
- Step 3)** Continue on the path with patience and tolerance. Do not over burden that you are discouraged and therefore lag behind.

25 Steps to a Successful Spiritual Journey

- Step 4)** Be loyal, remain faithful to what was repented and do not return to it. Be loyal to the mentor in this path of sulook (journey).
- Step 5)** Be stable and continuous in the chosen program and do not return.
- Step 6)** Monitor so that there is no violation.
- Step 7)** Be a muhasib - one who takes his own account, as it has been mentioned in the hadith **لَيْسَ مِنَّا مَنْ لَمْ يُحَاسِبْ نَفْسَهُ كُلَّ يَوْمٍ** one who does not take an account of himself every day is not from us.
- Step 8)** Muakhaza, to be determined to be tough on himself, when he does commit an error.
- Step 9)** Be the one who is quick in responding to the Divine commands before Shaitan whispers **وسارعوا إلى مغفرة من ربكم**
- Step 10)** **ارادت** i.e. be devoted, be dedicated to purify the inner self leaving no discrepancy, as the saalik adores and loves the ultimate authority of the Shareeat, the Prophet (sa) and the AhlulBayt (as).
- Step 11)** Adab i.e. one's humbleness before the Almighty Allah, the Apostle (sa) and his successors the Imams (as). Utter no word that could be the least complain in any form. Try your best to respect and honor the Masumeen (as), even in seeking hajaat from them be cautious in using the words to not command or forbid them in any way.
- Step 12)** Purify the Niyyat, i.e. intention that all actions are for the Almighty Allah.
- Step 13)** **صمت** i.e. Be quiet and protect the tongue from excessive talk and suffice with that what is just necessary.
- Step 14)** **جوع** i.e. Eat little - among the essential conditions in this journey. Joo' is eating little, being hungry, but not so much that could cause weakness and inability to worship.
- Step 15)** Khalwat i.e. distance yourself from the wrong doers, the rebellious, the sinners, the seekers of dunya, the insane. In worship, pay attention to the recitals, keep away from fame and publicity.
- Step 16)** **سهر** i.e. Keep awake especially the last part of the night. This has been emphasized a lot in ayaat and riwayaat.
- Step 17)** **دوام طهارة** i.e. Be in wudhu at all times. This blesses a special inner nooraniyat (enlightenment).
- Step 18)** **تضرع** i.e. Plead before the Lord of All Might and Praise. Observe humility before Him.
- Step 19)** Avoid all demands of the soul even though they may be lawful (mubah).

25 Steps to a Successful Spiritual Journey

Step 20) كتمان سرّ i.e. Be confidential. This is among the essential conditions the mentors in this field emphasize on. Keep all your observances and actions hidden and secretive so that the faintest riya and showing off is avoided. If visions from the unseen (ghayb) were shown, keep them a secret too. Do not reveal them to everyone as this will result in falling in the traps of pride and self-want.

Step 21) Have a mentor, an ustad, an ordinary one who can guide and give advice in sayr and sulook or a special mentor i.e. the Prophet (sa) or the Imams (as).

This is a very delicate issue. Until you examine one and witness his knowledge and his ability don't trust his advice as the Satans can well disguise in the attire of an ustad, wolves may disguise as shepherds and put away the salik from his path.

Allamah Tabatabai says, that even if you see miraculous tasks, or hidden sciences, walking on water or fire, future telling etc. ... one cannot be sure that the doer of these actions is of a lofty rank on the path of sulook. All this can be achieved in the stage of **مكاشفه روحیه** and from this stage to **سرحد وصول وكمال** is a long way ...

Step 22) ورد i.e. Be in zikr-recitals, that open up the path before the salik. These azkar help the salik pass the difficult path to Allah.

Step 23) نفی خواطرات i.e. Negating all inspirations, removing all distractions. It is to conquer the heart and to rule on it. Have such control on it that no thought nor inspiration gets to it but with its permission; in other words, make sure no scattered thoughts occupy you. Beware this is one of the difficult tasks!

Step 24) فکر i.e. Increase the thinking, salik with his correct thinking increases his marefat. All the effort in thinking should be related to the Names and Attributes and Divine Actions of the Almighty Allah.

Step 25) ذكّر i.e. Ponder over whole heartedly to Pure existence of the Almighty God, not verbal remembering which is known as **ورد**. In other words focus your sights and looks to the Beauty of the Mighty Lord and refrain from everyone but Him.

This was a brief note of the way of Sayr and Sulook mentioned by Allama BahrulUloom (ra). Allama Tabatabai too has mentioned a similar program with a little difference in his book **لبّ اللّباب**.

Excerpts from:

اخلاق در قرآن جلد اول - اصول مسائل اخلاقی

Akhlaq in Quran – Fundamentals of Ethical Issues
Ayatullah al-Udhma Makarem Shirazi