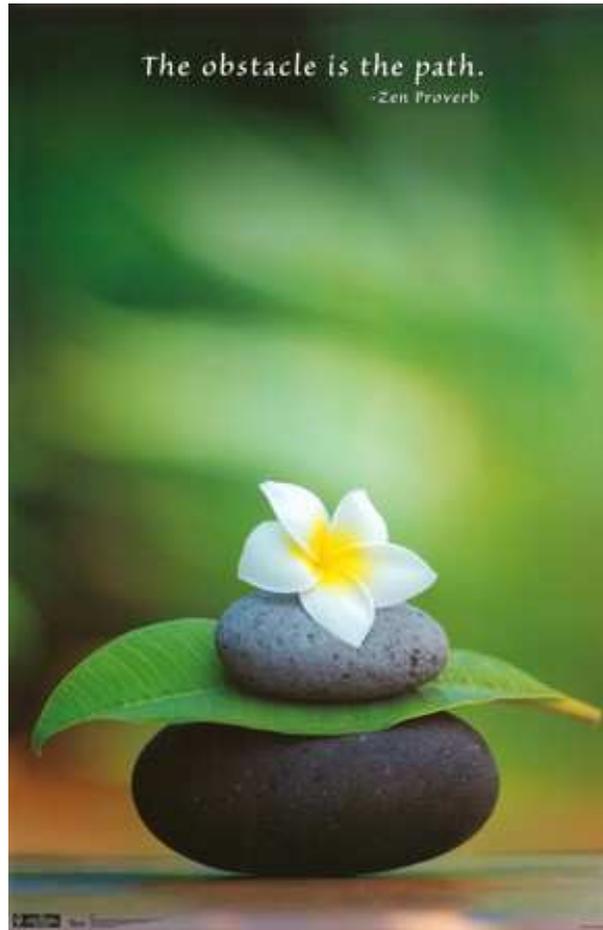


THE OBSTACLES ARE THE PATH

One mistake after another is also true practice.
(Dōgen)



Swami Ji has said that we should not hesitate to go all out to still the mind. We do not fully grasp that the mind takes everyone to his doom. It is like a thousand-faced snake, which is constantly with each being; it has a thousand different ways of destroying the person. The rich with riches, the poor with poverty, the orator with his fine speeches – it takes the weakness in each and plays upon it to destroy him.

(Sant Kirpal Singh)



There are no obstacles on the path;
The obstacles are the path.

In this world, those persons who are engaged in the upward march have constantly to face the inroads of two powerful enemies - the Mind and Matter. They try to put many obstacles in our way... (Sant Kirpal Singh, ruhanisatsangusa.org/trials.htm)



Our mind, we should never forget, is Satan incarnate, and an inveterate enemy of the soul. It does not wish the soul to gain emancipation from its overlordship, and does everything it can to prevent this. In other words, you may call it an imp of Satan – an active agent through which Lucifer spreads mischief and trouble. (Baba Sawan Singh, *Discourses on Sant Mat*, 266)

Evelyn Underhill

From the book *Mysticism*

Evelyn Underhill, in her classic work on the nature and development of spiritual consciousness, addresses the obstacles one faces on the Path in a chapter called “The Purification of the Self.”

In a sense the whole of the mystical experience in this life consists in a series of purifications, whereby the Finite slowly approaches the nature of its Infinite Source...

The greatest of the contemplative saints, far from leaving purgation behind them in their progress, were increasingly aware of their own inadequateness, the nearer they approached to the unitive state: for the true lover of the Absolute, like every other lover, is alternately abased and exalted by his unworthiness and his good fortune.

Purgation...consists in these two essential acts: The stripping away or purging away of those superfluous, unreal, and harmful things which dissipate the precious energies of the self and the rising to their highest term, their purest state, of all that remains – the permanent elements of character.

All those who have felt themselves urged towards the attainment of this transcendental vision, have found that possessions interrupt the view; that claims, desires, attachments become centers of conflicting interest in the mind. They assume a false air of importance, force themselves upon the attention, and complicate life.

The true rule of poverty consists in giving up those things which enchain the spirit, divide its interests, and deflect it on its road to God – whether these things be riches, habits, religious observances, friends, interests, distastes, or desires...

Every person in whom the mystical instinct awakes soon discovers in himself certain tastes or qualities which interrupt the development of that instinct (liberty of the soul). Often these tastes and qualities are legitimate enough upon their own plane; but they are a drain upon the energy of the self, prevent her from attaining that intenser life for which she was made and which demands her undivided zest. They distract her attention, fill the field of perception, stimulate her instinctive life: making of the surface-consciousness so active a thing that it can hardly be put to sleep.

The nature of these distracting factors which “confuse and enchain the mind” will vary with almost every individual. It is impossible to predict what those things will be which a self must give up, in order that the transcendental consciousness may grow.

Thus each adventurer must discover and extirpate all those interests which nourish selfhood, however innocent or even useful these interests may seem in the eyes of the world.



By way of example, Underhill uses the struggle of Saint Teresa of Avila to exemplify the necessity of confronting our obstacles in order to progress on our spiritual journey:

During the years of inward stress, of penance and growing knowledge of the Infinite, which she spent in the Convent of the Incarnation, and which accompanied this slow remaking of character, Teresa’s only self-indulgence – as it seems, a sufficiently innocent one – was talking to the friends who came down from Avila to the convent-parlor and spoke to her through the grille.

Teresa felt more and more the distracting influence of these glimpses of the outer world. They were a drain upon the energy which ought to be wholly given to that new, deep, more real life which she felt stirring within her...

Teresa knew that so long as she retained these personal satisfactions, her life had more than one focus; she was not whole-hearted in her surrender to the Absolute. But though her inward voices, her deepest instincts, urged her to give them up, for years she felt herself incapable of such a sacrifice. It was round the question of their retention or surrender that the decisive battle of her life was fought.

Her biographer stated, “For though she was resolved to belong entirely to God, she knew not how to shake herself free from the world: and at times she persuaded herself that she could enjoy both, which ended mostly, as she says, in complete enjoyment of neither.”



During eight and twenty years of prayer, I spent more than eighteen in that strife and contention which arose out of my attempt to reconcile God and the world.
(Saint Teresa of Avila)



The Path Through Obstacles

Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche

Obstacles aren't to be avoided.

When we apply the right antidotes, they are the path itself.

Whatever our level of meditation practice, there will always be obstacles. The Tibetan word for obstacle, *parche*, means “what cuts our progress.” In fact, sometimes the more we are engaged in practice, the greater the obstacles become, but if we understand that obstacles are part of the spiritual path, we can learn from them. Obstacles can be messages, signals that we need to wake up and look at what is going on. On a deeper, more profound level, we can include obstacles in our journey.



An outer obstacle is anything in the external world that distracts us from our development as a practitioner. For example, being busy becomes an obstacle to practice. Being overly involved with our family can keep us from practicing. Entertainment can be an obstacle: a hobby takes over our life, and suddenly we are not practicing. On a more subtle level, if our mind is continuously looking for a quality of entertainment, that is definitely an obstacle.



Inner obstacles include heavy emotions such as anger, vindictiveness, jealousy, ambition, desire, or doubt.



Laziness is such a big obstacle that it deserves special attention. Laziness can keep us from ever getting to our meditation seat. It can also manifest as busyness or—at the other end of the spectrum—feeling disheartened. Once we do sit down to meditate, it can keep us from relating properly to the practice technique. Although it occurs on every level, the obstacle of laziness is always connected with our view or attitude.



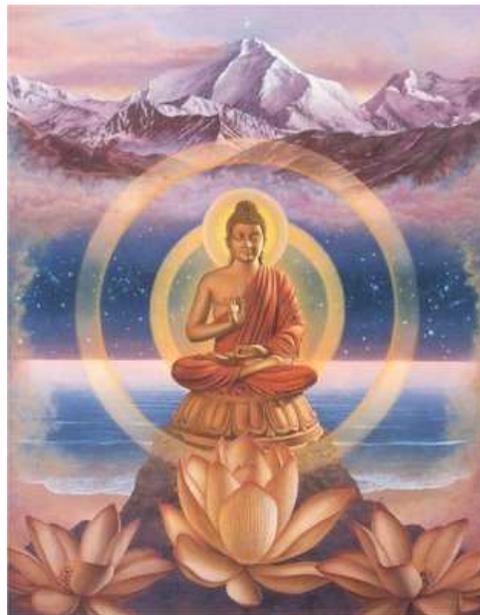
Working with obstacles provides a way to learn from them. Applying the antidotes, we use them to deepen our practice and progress toward realization. With mindfulness, awareness, and certainty in the view, we are able to have purpose in our practice and deep confidence in the path. These qualities bring a sense of happiness and satisfaction to whatever we are doing. That allows us to include everything in our practice, even our family and our work. If we are able to hold our mind to practice, the more worldly aspects of our life are no longer obstacles.



There have been renowned practitioners who have claimed that obstacles are their path. That is one aspect of the crazy wisdom teaching—delighting in the challenges and obstacles. Most of us must work on stabilizing our mind before we can say, “Bring on the obstacles!” We need to develop appreciation of our experiences and emotions before we can transcend them in this way.



Practicing regularly, cultivating peace and loving-kindness, and renewing our inspiration are the key elements in working with obstacles. This step-by-step approach gradually builds equanimity.



Out of a forward will lust had sprung; and lust pampered had become custom;
and custom indulged had become necessity. These were the links of the chain;
this is the bondage in which I was bound.

(Saint Augustine)

From: The Wise Heart:
A Guide to the Universal Teachings of Buddhist Psychology
Jack Kornfield

Buddhist psychology insists we come to terms with the power of our unconscious drives and instincts and the enormous suffering they can cause.

The three unhealthy roots – grasping, aversion, and delusion – must be clearly understood and transformed. These three roots are the primary unconscious drives, which generate all the difficult mental states.

Grasping, aversion, and delusion give rise to anger, pride, fear, sloth, and overindulgence. They produce misperception, doubt, restlessness, clinging to subtle pleasure, and the comparing mind. These unconscious forces can lie dormant, and when conditions are right they are activated.

These deep drives, unconscious fears, graspings, and confusions are called latent roots. Through profound insight and deep meditation, these latent roots can be released, bringing successive degrees of freedom, called stages of enlightenment.

Grasping, aversion, and delusion are the classic “three roots” of all unhealthy states, and they also create three unhealthy personality types, three styles of approaching the world. The first is ruled by wanting. The second is ruled by rejecting. The third is governed by confusion.

These unhealthy temperaments can be changed into healthy patterns. Then we can see that the personality is not a permanent essence. Like the body, it is a temporary condition. It is not who we really are.

The unhealthy patterns of our personality can be recognized and transformed into a healthy expression of our natural temperament.



Of all the worldly passions, lust is the most intense.
All other worldly passions seem to follow in its train.
(Buddha)



The Grasping Temperament

The secret waits for eyes unclouded by longing.
(Zen saying)

The grasping or greed temperament is constructed around desire. It is experienced as a sense of seeking, of wanting more, and of addiction.

It grasps after comfort and avoids disharmony in all situations. It desires fulfillment through pleasures, finding what it likes in the world of the senses. From liking, it can move quickly to craving, passion, and sensuality. Out of the roots of grasping there arise associated states of vanity, willfulness, pride, self-centeredness, jealousy, avarice, deceit, and addiction.

Buddhists connect the root of desire with the neutral mental factor called the will to do. It is part of the energy of life. When the will to do is directed in healthy ways, it brings about healthy desires. When the will to do is directed in unhealthy ways, it brings about unhealthy desires. The traditional description of unhealthy desires include greed, addiction, overwhelming ambition, gambling, womanizing.

Unhealthy desire gives rise to possessiveness, self-centeredness, dissatisfaction, compulsion, unworthiness, insatiability, and similar forms of suffering.

At its extreme, grasping and desire become addiction. Buddhist psychology describes the state of addiction as becoming a hungry ghost. No matter how much the ghost tries to eat, satisfaction is impossible. This is the state of consciousness where desire becomes insatiable, thirst becomes unquenchable. For the hungry ghost, like an addict, a few moments of relief comes with the drink or the high or the binge, followed by a pause and craving for more.

We use our desires to distract ourselves from discomfort. When an unconscious feeling of insecurity, boredom, or emptiness arises, desire follows.

With mindfulness we can witness the arising and passing of desire. We can allow the body sensations, the feeling states, and the stories of desire to be graciously received without judgment. When desire is met mindfully, the energy of desire will often intensify for a time and try to overcome us. If we don't rush to fulfill the desire, but simply stay present, the discomfort will eventually pass. Then we can notice what follows: usually a sense of ease, a peacefulness in body and mind, until desire arises once more a short time later.

No one can be enlightened
unless he be first cleansed or purified and stripped.
(Theologia Germanica)



Discipline

Henepola Gunaratana

Discipline is a difficult word for most of us. It conjures up images of somebody standing over you with a stick, telling you that you are wrong.

But self-discipline is different. It's the skill of seeing through the hollow shouting of your own impulses and piercing their secret.

They have no power over you. It's all a show, a deception. Your urges scream and bluster at you; they cajole; they coax; they threaten; but they really carry no stick at all.

You give in out of habit. You give in because you never really bother to look beyond the threat. It is all empty back there.

There is only one way to learn this lesson though. The words on this page won't do it.

But look within and watch the stuff coming up - restlessness, anxiety, impatience, pain - just watch it come up and don't get involved.

Much to your surprise, it will simply go away. It rises, it passes away. As simple as that.

There is another word for self-discipline. It is patience.



Forget the past. The vanished lives of all men are dark with many shames.
Human conduct is ever unreliable until man is anchored in the Divine.
Everything in the future will improve if you are making a spiritual effort now.
(Sri Yukteswar)



The Aversive Temperament

The aversive temperament is constructed around judgment and rejection of experience. It has a disaffected quality that easily sees faults, and for this temperament, problems are apparent everywhere. It is critical, quickly displeased, quarrelsome, and disparaging of many things.

Its quality of aversion can give rise to states of anger, vindictiveness, haughtiness, hatred, cruelty, aggression, and struggle to control.

Aversion, anger, and hatred are stages of mind that strike against experience, pushing it away, rejecting what is presented in the moment.

Fear is a common predecessor to anger and hate – fear of loss, of hurt, of embarrassment, of shame, of weakness, of not knowing. When fear arises, anger and aversion function as strategies to help us feel safe, to declare our strength and security. In fact, we actually feel insecure and vulnerable, but we cover this fear and vulnerability with anger and aggression.

In a healthy response to pain and fear, we establish awareness before it becomes anger. We can train ourselves to notice the gap between the moments of sense experience and the subsequent response. Because of the particle-like nature of consciousness, we can enter the space between instinct and action, between impulse and reaction.

The Sacred Pause

Because experience happens so quickly, habitual responses can come out of our mouth or from our hands before we know it. It helps to practice skillful responses when things are easy. That way when things are tough, our pattern is already set.

It also helps to train ourselves to pause before our response. This is called the Sacred Pause, a moment where we stop and release our identification with problems and reactions. Without a pause our actions are automatic. In a moment of stopping, we break the spell between past result and automatic reaction.

When we pause, we can notice the actual experience, the pain or pleasure, fear or excitement. In the stillness before our habits arise, we become free.

The Deluded Temperament

Doubt, the ruthless hunter, lurks within your body;
His arrow has pierced the flawless diamond of your soul.
(Kabir)

The deluded or confused temperament is constructed around uncertainty and confusion. People with this temperament experience not quite knowing what to do or how to relate to the world. They seek to establish ease by ignoring what is happening or through dullness or inaction.

The deluded temperament gives rise to perplexity and worry, doubt, negligence, scattered thoughts, anxiety, and agitation.

Delusion can lead us to ignore the facts and cling to our views and opinions; it creates a loss of connection with reality. At its extreme, delusion becomes outright psychosis. Our ordinary delusion can take us from the reality of the present into the unreality of our thoughts and confused misperceptions. With delusion we can get lost in a dreamy and unconscious life.

When we live in delusion, we are quick to judge others. We miss their inner beauty. We also miss their pain, and cannot respond to them with compassion. With inattention, we miss the meal in front of us, the parade of passersby, the ever-changing scenery, the openhearted connection with the world.

Deeper than inattention, another form of delusion is denial. Denial arises when we don't believe what is actually in front of our eyes. On a personal level, we can deny problems at work, difficulties in our marriage, depression, or addiction, as if denial will make them go away.



As long as you are trying to be something other than what you actually are, your mind wears itself out. But if you say, "This is what I am, it is a fact that I am going to investigate and understand," then you can go beyond.
(J. Krishnamurti)



The Greatest Obstacle

Sant Kirpal Singh

Question: Master, what's the greatest obstacle to one's being totally devoted to You?

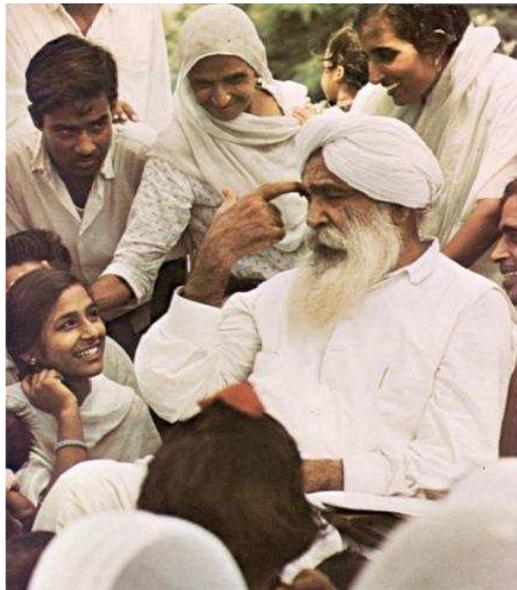
Master: No ruling passion. Want of ruling passion.

Disciple: Want of ruling passion?

Master: That's all. When you have a ruling passion, your mind cannot go anywhere else. You will try to withdraw from outside and put your whole attention with something higher.

Now we are identified with the world, as I just told you, congealed with the world, just as paintings cannot leave the wall. Paintings are on the wall and cannot leave the wall. Similarly, we are so much identified with the body and outward environments that we cannot think of leaving them.

This work is done by regular concentration of meditation. Ever since we are born, we have been receiving impressions through our eyes and ears, and all other outgoing faculties as well. Eighty percent of these impressions come through the eyes, and fourteen percent through the ears. So we are so much identified with these impressions that we cannot withdraw from outside; they are embedded. So when you are identified all outside, in the world, you cannot withdraw. (ruhanisatsangusa.org/personal.htm)



Question: How do I develop a ruling passion for God?

Master Kirpal Singh: How do you develop a ruling passion to meet someone?

Disciple: By thinking of them?

Master: Naturally. If you meet somebody you love, you talk about him. You would like to hear somebody talking about him. You would like to read something about him. If you love somebody and somebody tells you something about the one you love, then naturally he is more dear to you than whom you love. He who tells me about God, is my true friend.

That (remembrance) will develop more attraction in you, which will grow, become passionate. So the first thing is to have sweet remembrance, growing stronger day to day until you cannot live a moment without Him. Then He comes!

The child cries and the mother comes to give him something to eat and again goes away. Again he cries until nothing satisfies him but the mother taking him in her arms. When you want nothing else other than Him, He comes.

(Kirpal Singh: His Grace Lives On, 43)



Our regularity in meditation and the amount of our leisure time we spend in sweet remembrance of the Master is directly proportional to the extent of our passion, zeal, love, and eagerness to reach our goal in the least possible time.

(Sant Darshan Singh)



Once you discover this Light and learn to live by it, your whole existence will be changed. Love will permeate your very being and it will burst forth from the very pores of your body, transmuting all dross into sterling gold.

(Sant Kirpal Singh, Spiritual Elixir, 189)



Meditation

Sant Kirpal Singh

You have mentioned regarding your introspection diaries – that when others are progressing on the Way, why should it not be so in your case. Meditation is a matter of love and devotion; it is meant to cleanse the vessel of all inner dirt and filth. Unkind thoughts, temptations for revenge, a pride of learning and knowledge, lurking doubts and skepticism, distrust of God and lack of faith in Him are some of the formidable barriers that stand in the way and prevent His grace and blessing from flowing in. Meditation done in an accurate way and with regularity, giving proper time with love and devotion, does bring good results and in abundance. (Spiritual Elixir, 130)



Question: How do you prevent clutching in meditation?

Master Kirpal Singh: What should a beggar do who sits at the door of a donor? He should wait. It is all a gift, no compensation for anything you have done--nothing. What you get is a sheer gift. He may or may not give; it is all His Grace. Sit at the door and wait. Wait and see--clutching will be over. Clutching is business-like, "Oh, this has not come. You have not given this thing. You have not given that thing." You have no claim to that. Whatever is given is sheer Grace, a gift in return for no effort on our part. It is a gift. Is it not? With that understanding, clutching will be over. Very simple. Do you follow how the clutching should be overcome? You sit at the Door and wait--that is all. Yours is only to sit at the Door, quite cut off from all outside, nothing else. (ruhanisatsangusa.org/lok/clutching.htm)



The first thing the negative power does when he wants to keep control over a soul is to stop them doing bhajan and simran. The individual finds that there is always something to lure him away from his meditation. (The Night is a Jungle, 175)



If you really want to rid yourself of present bad habits...you have no greater recourse than meditation. Every time you meditate deeply on God, beneficial changes take place in the patterns of your brain.
(Yogananda)



Faith

Question: How does faith in the Master-Power develop?

Master Kirpal Singh: By regular practice. Faith is, I would say, the root cause of religion. For faith you must have something to stand on.

Some people are in the make already, they have that grown already. Others have to form faith in due course, not all at once. So it's better when you see you are helped by Master in all your affairs; when you see some improvement in your inner way. First, when you see quite impossible things are made very softened down, naturally faith arises. Faith is the root cause of all religion. If there is no ground, where will the building stand?

First, you have to take it as a hypothesis, then you must benefit regularly by seeing or by experiencing your faith. The Masters say: Don't believe unless you see for your own self what is what. The more you come in contact with Master, and the more you become receptive, the more faith you will have in Him.

(The Light of Kirpal, page 105)



Look here, faith comes only as a result of the reaction of the past; or if you see something... So blind faith does not help you, only to a certain extent, not beyond. (Sant Kirpal, [ruhanisatsangusa.org/lok/first see.htm](http://ruhanisatsangusa.org/lok/first%20see.htm))



Sant-Mat does not ask for blind faith or acceptance on mere authority. It is purely practical. Any belief not based on personal experience and verification of facts has little value. One should therefore try to see with one's own eyes and hear with one's own ears rather than indirectly with the eyes and ears of others. (Sant Kirpal, ruhanisatsangusa.org/tours/55/ss55_08.htm)



This love and faith also come with the grace of a perfect Master. It is He who can help us to get both love and faith. (Sant Kirpal, ruhanisatsangusa.org/gurmukh.htm)



Faith begins as an experiment and ends as an experience. (W.R. Inge)



Sant Kirpal Singh

Our greatest obstacle is that the soul is under the mind's control, and mind, in turn, is under the senses' control. So, release from this bondage is hastened by living righteously. When they asked Zoroaster what the qualifications were for returning to God, he replied, "Righteousness." They then asked him what righteousness consisted of, and he said, *Good thoughts, good words, and good deeds*. Like the Masters, we should think of the good in all people, and have concern for the upliftment of all. (ruhanisatsangusa.org/whohigh.htm)



For the essential advantage in the field of spirituality is to be found not without but within. It lies not in the absence of outer opposition but in ones inner capacity for complete self-surrender and love; and outward obstacles may in fact act as tests and stimuli for the development of this capacity. (ruhanisatsangusa.org/gemsq.htm)



Who can rise above body-consciousness? One who is unattached and is not engrossed in sensual pleasures can do it. Only such a person can easily tap inside. Ethical and chaste life is, therefore, very essential. Even if the Master, by His own Grace, lifts someone whose life is not pure above body consciousness, the latter will not be able to withstand it. **It is crystal clear that there are two main obstacles in the way: passionate desires and anger.** To lead a chaste life is not enough. We have to overcome all desires. In anger the soul flows out. Self-indulgence and anger lead to various other vices. Unless these two enemies are disciplined first, others - greed, attachment, and egotism - cannot be controlled. One who succeeds in conquering all these five enemies is free from suffering. The senses derive their power from the mind and the mind from the soul. If our attention is concentrated at the seat of the soul, the senses become powerless. (ruhanisatsangusa.org/chaste.htm)



So I wish for you to tread the Path having full faith and confidence in the Master, and above all, be grateful that you have been accepted for Initiation in this difficult age we are living in. Persevere, persevere, and persevere again. Perseverance combined with full faith in the gracious Master Power working overhead will one day remove all obstacles, and your cherished goal will be achieved. (ruhanisatsangusa.org/receptiv.htm)

...is it psychologically possible for the human mind to detach itself completely from its normal field of experience without first anchoring itself in another and higher one? It is a universal characteristic of man that he seeks kinship with something other than himself. This is the law of his life and source of all his great achievements. The child is bound to his toys, and the adult to family and society. As in the case of a child, you may not without harm deprive him of his playthings until he has outgrown them psychologically, likewise **to expect the sadhak (disciple) to give up his social and family attachments without first outgrowing them by discovering something greater and larger, is to cut at the root of life.** It will not bring progress but regression, for the man who undertakes it as an enforced discipline only succeeds in repressing his natural desires. The result is not the enhancement of consciousness but its numbing and atrophy, not detachment but indifference. (ruhanisatsangusa.org/col/col-5a.htm#The%20cornerstones)



There is a sound of truth vibrating within - a song which is sung in every being. There is a great attraction in hearing this sound, through which all other attractions will fade away - one becomes free of them.
([The Teachings of Kirpal Singh](#), v. 2, 166)



You enjoy outside and unless you get more blissful enjoyment inside you cannot withdraw from outside. ([ruhanisatsangusa.org/lok/first see.htm](http://ruhanisatsangusa.org/lok/first%20see.htm))



The mind is a lover of enjoyments, and in the Naam there is the Maha Ras - the most delectable Nectar one can ever taste. If only the mind would take one true sip, it would never again yearn for lower enjoyments. (ruhanisatsangusa.org/listen.htm)



When one gets the Naam's inner nectar, all worldly intoxicants seem ridiculous, and when the seed of Naam sprouts, all other things become meaningless.
(ruhanisatsangusa.org/tghp.htm)



One cannot possibly forsake the lusts of the flesh unless one comes to know by actual contrast, the real happiness in the life of the spirit which comes about by communion with the holy Word. (ruhanisatsangusa.org/guru-means.htm)

Even a little intoxication derived from steady daily practice will start to erase the taste for outer pleasures. ([ruhanisatsangusa.org/thief of.htm](http://ruhanisatsangusa.org/thief%20of.htm))



If your daily life is not under control, try to bring it in control, or, give more time to meditation and you will be able to gain control quicker. ([ruhanisatsangusa.org/thief of.htm](http://ruhanisatsangusa.org/thief%20of.htm))



When you come in contact with Light and Sound Power within, you have not to adopt any virtues, but everything, all virtues, will come within you of themselves. (ruhanisatsangusa.org/lok/occupied.htm)



Julian Johnson

While we sojourn in this dark region of matter, we have to deal with the negative power. With him we must contend in our struggles for spiritual freedom. It is his duty to try to hold us here, while it is our duty to try to escape. The resulting struggle purges us and makes us strong, and fits us for our homeward journey. This everlasting fight, this struggle in a welter of pain and blood and heart cries, is designed by the supreme Father to purge us and make us clean, ready for our homeward ascent. Let us never become discouraged. All of this is designed by the Father for our benefit. It is much as if one enters a gymnasium to take exercise. If we meet these difficulties in the right spirit, we shall greatly profit by them. The idea of pain and struggle is to purge us and inspire in us a longing to rise above the regions of pain and shadow.



One cannot expect to become a saint without paying the price,
and the price is much renunciation, much temptation,
much struggle and persecution, and all sorts of sacrifice.
(Mother Teresa)



No one can live without delight and that is why a man deprived of spiritual joy goes over to carnal pleasures.
(Saint Thomas Aquinas)



From Prayer: Its Nature and Technique

(ruhanisatsangusa.org/pray/pray_22.htm)

Sant Kirpal Singh

As his angle of vision changes, so does the nature of his prayer. At first a person prays for the fulfillment of his physical needs; but when one starts on the spiritual path he prays for the removal of such obstacles as come in his way, e.g., sense-turmoil, mental chattering, ingrained karmic impressions.

This period is most critical in the life of a sadhak (disciple). Until actual self-realization he is in a state of perpetual restlessness, tossing back and forth. He belongs wholly neither to the world nor to God. While in the eyes of worldly people he is a man of piety, yet in the heart of his heart he knows he is full of iniquities.

In this state of uncertainty the sadhak at times tries to snap away and escape from the struggle; but after a time the inner urge once again comes upon him and he takes courage and starts Godward.

*Should a traveler while traveling fall down,
There is nothing to wonder and cavil at.
O Kabir! One who sits and starts not on the journey,
Has an immeasurable distance yet to traverse.*

But until a person is able to subdue his senses and sensory organs and rid the mind of oscillations, the kindly Light of God does not dawn upon him.

The wiles of the mind are both very subtle and risky. It often lies in ambush and makes its inroads when least expected. The ingrained evil propensities though invisible are very strong, and time and again they come to the surface to deliver blows which often prove fatal. The coil strikes out like lightning, with such sharp and sudden twists and turns that man by himself is helpless in its clutches. Here comes the need for the long and strong arm of the Master, which stretches forth with equal agility to his rescue:

Subdue the mind with the Power of the Master.
(Swami Shiv Dayal Singh)



The sleeping mind comes to its own by constant thought of the Master.
(Guru Ram Das)

How to Overcome Inner Difficulties

From Prayer: Its Nature and Technique

Heart is the pulpit for offering prayer and must, therefore, be cleaned and purified before we engage in prayer.

1. Purity of heart consists in respectful and humble attitude toward God free from all cares and anxieties of the world.
2. Humility born of helplessness, coupled with confidence and faith in Him.
3. Loving Devotion. Next we have to still the mind, to make it free from the mental oscillations that continuously pull it this way and that. **To achieve stillness of the mind we have to find within some center or pole to which it may be drawn time and again, so that gradually we succeed in stilling the mind at will. Until such ground is found, an aspirant is in a very delicate and slippery state.**

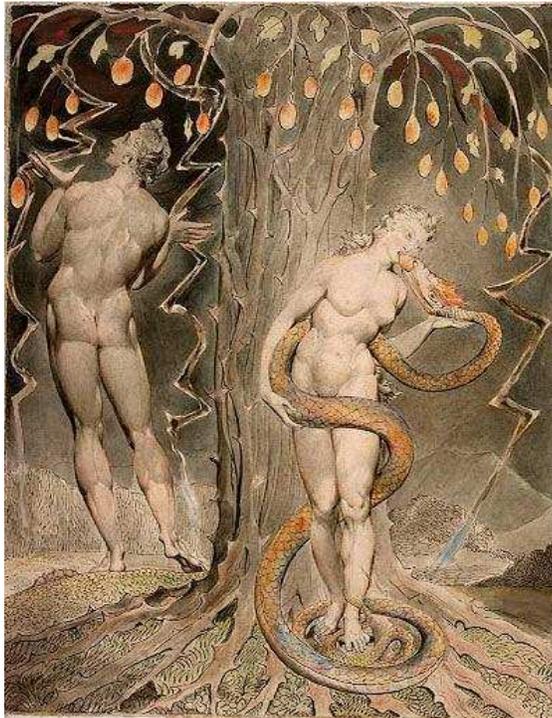
As he withdraws from the outer world and its associations and waits for the dawn of the new world, **he is haunted by countless seed impressions hitherto lying buried in the depth of unconsciousness.** One can free himself from these either by right contemplation or by seeking aid through prayer to the Power within. The surest and the easiest way to cross over these hurdles is to think of the form of the Master and to fix one's attention in that form. This "tapping inside" or "knocking," as it grows continuous and steady, gradually forces open the "Way in," bringing to view endless vistas of spiritual visions and rapturous strains of Divine Symphonies.

Again **there are myriads of obstacles in the inner path.** Sometimes an aspirant gets no response to his prayers and begins to doubt their efficacy. At other times far removed from God, he finds himself in a strange and vast stillness and feels his own vibrations. Others get entangled in the deep darkness behind the eyes and cannot penetrate into the Beyond. So bewildering and complicated are these regions of darkness and silence that one feels he has lost his way. In spite of his best efforts, he totters over and over again, tries to stand on his legs but slips over.

This is indeed a very sad and delicate situation. By his unaided efforts he cannot safely come out of this labyrinth. It is in such weird and eerie surroundings that instructions from a Master-soul can be of avail to him. These are just a few of the countless difficulties with which this path is strewn. The Negative Power has a regular network of pitfalls to thwart designs even of the wisest and wariest of souls and by all kinds of wiles tries to ambush the weary traveler on the path. Its triumph lies in keeping the Jivas or embodied souls entirely in its clutches so that its sway over them remains undiminished and its glory undimmed. One can escape these dark forces only through the help of one who has himself conquered them, for such forces live in fear of him and do not molest a soul that is in league with him. The long arm of the Master and his strong hand can lead a Jiva unscathed through all dangers with which the inner path is beset at every step. (ruhanisatsangusa.org/pray/pray_08.htm)



My face is overrun with wrinkles;
My head is marked with gray.
My limbs have gone flaccid;
Craving alone keeps its youth and vigor.
(Vairagya-Shataka)



William Blake – The Temptation and Fall of Eve

The Diary

The purpose of the diary is to reflect your own inner state, so that you know where you stand. It is a tool, which if used properly, will chisel you into a receptacle fit for the manifestation of the Master within you.

(Sant Kirpal Singh, ruhanisatsangusa.org/receptive.htm)



Once you become aware of a failure, you should be able to trace it to a certain situation, and this situation will help you to identify the cause of the weakness in you that has to be strengthened. By and by, the very cause of the failure will drop off by itself. (Sant Kirpal Singh, ruhanisatsangusa.org/receptive.htm)



Those who do not maintain the diary will lose valuable ground in making steady spiritual progress. (Sant Kirpal Singh, ruhanisatsangusa.org/ondiary-c.htm)



The diary forms should be a true reflection of your own inner state. The failures made should be as an open self-confession of the shortcomings which stand between you and the Master. (Sant Kirpal Singh, ruhanisatsangusa.org/ondiary-c.htm)



If you live up to the sublime purpose behind the keeping of the diary, you will progress from day to day, and achieve your goal in this lifetime.

(Sant Kirpal Singh, ruhanisatsangusa.org/ondiary-c.htm)



A consciousness of wrongdoing is the first step to salvation... You have to catch yourself doing it before you can correct it. (Seneca)



We should every night call ourselves to an account; what infirmity have I mastered today? What passions opposed? What temptation resisted? What virtue acquired? Our vices will abort themselves if they be brought every day to the shrift. (Seneca)

The first step toward finding God, Who is Truth, is to discover the truth about myself: and if I have been in error, this first step to truth is the discovery of my error. (Thomas Merton)



The diary form was designed by a conscious entity (Sant Kirpal Singh), who in life was an accountant, to help others reach His level...The form...has for its column heading “observe” and “failures”. The word “observe” suggests that we watch with an open or objective or detached mind. Just note. That’s all. Nowhere does it say that we should feel guilty or get discouraged, or take credit when we don’t fail...After awhile, the voice which notes at night begins to speak in the day when the same situation comes up. This voice some call conscience. The more we listen to it, the stronger it becomes. In mystical literature this voice is called “The Witness” or “The Watcher”...Master advises us to work on one trait at a time, calling them weeds to be weeded out and not watered...The difference between His method and that of modern psychology is profound. Modern psychology teaches us how to express these traits. Master teaches us how to uproot them. Both agree repressing these traits is harmful. (Robert Leverant)



The downward drag is incessant, and can be controlled only by those who are clearly aware of it, and are willing to sacrifice lower interests and joys to the demands of the spiritual life.

(Evelyn Underhill)



Meher Baba

The aspirant, who has decided to reach the goal, carries with himself all the sanskaras (predominating nature, the result of past karmic impressions) which he has accumulated in the past, and, in the intensity of his spiritual longing, they remain half-suspended and ineffective for the time being. But, time and again, when there is the slackening of the spiritual effort, the sanskaras which had hitherto been suspended from action, gather fresh strength, and arraying themselves in new formation, constitute formidable obstacles in the spiritual advancement of the aspirant.



Success in concentration comes only gradually, and the novice is likely to be disheartened, because he does not get satisfactory results in the beginning. The disappointment which he experiences is itself often a serious obstruction to begin the meditation of the day and persist in it. Other obstacles like idleness and ill health might also be found to be difficult to overcome; but they can be got over by having fixed and regular hours for meditation and steady practice.



Every man is a rightful heir to the Truth: but he who would inherit it must be spiritually prepared for it; and this spiritual preparation sometimes takes several lives of patient and persistent effort. Therefore, one of the first requirements of the aspirant is that he should combine unflinching enthusiasm with unyielding patience. Once a man is determined to realize the Truth, he finds that his path is beset with many difficulties, and there are very few who persist with steady courage till the very end. It is easy to give up effort when one is confronted with obstacles. (http://ambppct.org/meherbaba/Book_Files/Dis_V_V5.pdf)



The process of self-purification is not the work of a moment, nor of a few months but of years - nay, extending over a series of lives. The later a man begins the living of a higher life, the longer must be his period of probation, for he has to undo the effects of a long number of years spent in objects diametrically opposed to the real goal. The more strenuous his efforts and the brighter the results of his work, the nearer he comes to the threshold. If his aspiration is genuine - a settled conviction and not a sentimental flash of the moment - he transfers from one body to another the determination which finally leads him to the attainment of his desire. (Letters from the Masters of Wisdom)

Baba Sawan Singh

Defeat is not so bad as the admission of defeat. (Spiritual Gems, letter 82)



It is better to die in sincere effort than to attain all worldly success.
(The Dawn of Light, letter 19)



You must reach the supreme Goal in due time. Some reach it sooner, others later, according to their individual efforts and the karma they have to overcome.
(The Ambrosial Hour, 98)



The process of cleaning is going on, and after all, what is a ten or twelve years' period, or even one lifetime, in which the karmic accounts of all the previous innumerable lives has to be settled! (The Dawn of Light, letter 53)



A period of disappointment intervenes often in the life of the devotee. This is desirable. It has a purpose. It gives the shock. After a time spent in disappointment, the intensity of love for spiritual uplift increases. A temporary obstruction in the path of determination gives it momentum to proceed ahead.
(Spiritual Gems, letter 46)



It is natural to be disappointed at the failure of our first effort, but in the spiritual journey we must have patience to wait and observe the will of the Master.
(The Dawn of Light, letter 6)



If it were an easy affair (to control one's mind), Guru Nanak would not have sat on pebbles for twelve years. Christ would not have spent nineteen years in the Tibetan hills and Soami Ji himself would not have contemplated in a solitary, dark, back room for seventeen years. (Spiritual Gems, letter 143)



The efforts of the disciple and the grace of the Master go hand in hand. Effort is rewarded with grace, and grace brings more effort. When a laborer gets his wages after a day's work, is the Master so unjust that he will keep back his grace from a diligent disciple? (Spiritual Gems, letter 200)



When the mind has gone in, it tastes sweetness such as it has never before tasted in worldly objects. Then it becomes obedient and faithful. So long as it has not tasted that sweetness, there is no greater enemy. The primary factor in this success is the effort of the disciple. (Spiritual Gems, letter 200)



With the longing to go within and the hearing of the Sound Current becoming tasteful, the indulgence or play in sex decreases and ultimately becomes hateful, and is automatically given up, like other bad habits, such as anger, greed and so forth. (Spiritual Gems, 317)



So long as the mind has not developed the capacity to throw away, at will, the impressions of this world, it cannot sit inside, disconnected from this world, nor can it have access to the inner world. But it has the capacity to do so and it has to be trained. It is a slow affair, requires patience, perseverance, and faith. (Spiritual Gems, letter 150)



In the beginning, there is a hard struggle to bring the attention to the eye focus...But when the habit to reach the focus has been acquired, the glimpses of the inner world make this study interesting. (Spiritual Gems, letter 210)



You know from experience that the path is not an easy one. It is death in life - a living death. (The Dawn of Light, 169)



What has been long neglected cannot be restored immediately.
Fruit falls from the tree when it is ripe.
The Way cannot be forced.
(Buddha)

Resistance to Change

On the one hand I felt the call of God; on the other, I continued to follow the world. All the things of God gave me great pleasure, but I was held captive by those of the world. I might have been said to be trying to reconcile these two extremes, to bring contraries together: the spiritual life on the one hand and worldly satisfactions, pleasures, and pastimes on the other. (Saint Teresa of Avila)



I was held back by mere trifles, the most paltry inanities, all my old attachments. They plucked at my garments of flesh and whispered: “Are you going to dismiss us? From this moment we shall never be with you again, for ever and ever. From this moment you will never again be allowed to do this thing, or that, for evermore.” (Saint Augustine)



So did my two wills, one new, the other old, one spiritual, the other carnal, fight within me and by their discord undo my soul. (Saint Augustine)



Rationalizations enter the mind - perhaps the thought: “Won’t God be just as pleased with me if I live a good, moral life? Must I give up everything human - everything normal, and be left in the end with, perhaps, nothing?” (Yogananda)



In the quest for Divine Bliss, there lingers subconsciously in the mind a certain apprehension: the fear of bereavement, of losing one’s old associations and familiar sense enjoyments; most of all, of losing one’s own self-identity. (Yogananda)



Change, even change for the better, is often approached with apprehension. In giving up something people think, “Will I be left with - nothing?” It takes courage to renounce the known for the unknown. It is not easy even to renounce a familiar pain for an unknown, and therefore uncertain, happiness. (Yogananda)



All changes, even the most longed for, have their melancholy; for what we leave behind us is a part of ourselves; we must die to one life before we can enter another. (Anatole France)



Even though we know that the bondage of the mind is the cause of suffering, somehow we don't want to become free from its clutches, because our mental fantasies, ideas, and concepts have created our life. When the time comes to free ourselves from these things, we feel we are going to flounder, we feel we will lose the reality that we have known for so long and have grown so accustomed to. We get scared, and even though we know the bondage of the mind creates so much suffering, we don't want to be free of it. (Gurumayi)



All that has blemished your pure life in the past can be left in the hands of the Master, and in the future you should live a clean and chaste life and be regular in your spiritual practices. You will come very close to the Master, and His love will just envelop you. (Sant Kirpal, ruhanisatsangusa.org/tours/55/ss55_11.htm)



One has to outlive and forget one's past whatever it be...
(Sant Kirpal, ruhanisatsangusa.org/gemsqa.htm)



You are advised to draw a thick curtain over the past and just forget everything which has since passed as no amount of repentance or resentment can do it. You must start a new pattern of life. (The Teachings of Kirpal Singh, v. 1, 53)



When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put childish ways behind me. (Corinthians)



Life is a campaign against foes, it is a battle with obstacles, temptations, hardships and limitations. These foes are within man and so the battle has to be incessant and perpetual. (Sathya Sai Baba)

The Obstacle is the Path

(Wonderful Buddha Web-site)

As the proverb says, “the obstacle is the path”; if you think for a bit about it, you will see that you can apply that to many different areas of your life.

Have you ever been in a situation where you thought “Why me?” “This always happens to me!” That you were the only person on this earth that a particular obstacle was placed in your path to create pain only to you and no other person?

But did you also know that each obstacle encountered is subject to change, for as we perceive the problem today, that same problem will not be the same problem tomorrow? Obstacles that were huge and insurmountable today will, with time and thought, become not so big tomorrow. It is an amazing fact that we really can “move mountains” when we have the desire to.

Whatever terrible thing is happening right now, remember “This too shall pass” and as with everything, there is ALWAYS a light at the end of the tunnel. Time marches on and you along with it and the meaning we place on the obstacle will determine how we react to each new obstacle that comes our way. It’s not a test, as most would think, but it does provide you with the ability to learn from whatever the obstacle may be and encourages you to develop your skills in problem solving.

Each obstacle we face in life is just another path to our learning. We have to learn in order to move forward and if these obstacles are a constant thing in our life then we need to re-evaluate the life we are living. What could we do differently? “What have I learned from this and what is the meaning I have placed on this right now?”

Our mind is a unique and marvelous thing - we just have to learn how to use it! We have the ability to imagine incredible things, and solving the problems of whatever obstacle comes our way is one of the amazing qualities we have at our disposal within our own mind.

Concentrate on the success you wish to be yours and amazing things will be revealed to you in the most fantastic way. Obstacles become a challenge and set your mind to wanting to learn new things. Keep learning and growing and you will begin to love the process of accepting the challenges to moving those obstacles. Life is abundant in everything you need so get out and live it and love it and share it with everyone you can! (<http://wonderfulbuddha.wordpress.com/2011/06/17/the-obstacle-is-the-path-%E2%99%A5the-obstacleth/>)

Overcoming Obstacles in Sadhana

(yogamag.net/archives/2009/isep09/over.shtml)

There is always a complaint among aspirants, “I am meditating for the last twelve years, yet I have not made any improvement. I have no realization.” Why is it so?

Real spiritual development and progress in sadhana are indeed very hard to attain. The workings of maya are so very subtle, so very difficult to overcome, and human nature is fundamentally so unregenerate, that it refuses to be transformed from its vicious state to a state of virtue, goodness. To achieve any measure of success in spiritual life is a difficult and uphill task. It is divine grace alone that can raise the aspirant from darkness to light.

Be Prepared for Obstacles

On the spiritual path you must be prepared to meet with hundreds of failures, innumerable difficulties, and obstacles. In the beginning it may appear to be very hard, thorny, precipitous, and slippery. To walk on this path is like walking on the edge of a sharp razor. You will fall down many times, but if you are sincere and earnest in your practice you will rise up quickly and walk again with more zeal, boldness and cheerfulness. Every stumbling block will become a stepping stone to success or ascent on the hill of spiritual knowledge. Every fall will give you additional strength to rise up to a greater height on the ladder of yoga.

Do not let failures discourage you, but go on doing your best. Do not brood over your past mistakes and failures, as this will only fill your mind with grief, regret and depression. Do not repeat them in the future. Just think of the causes which led to your failures and try to remove them in the future.

Trials Strengthen the Spirit

Trials are for strengthening the aspirants and their rapid spiritual growth. One will grow quickly if one can adapt oneself to any kind of environment and circumstance. If God gives trials, side by side He also gives new strength, patience and fortitude to bear the trials. There is no room for lamentation. Say once more, “Thy will be done.” All saints and sages, all prophets and seers had to pass through tremendous struggles and severe ordeals before they reached the goal.

Your spiritual growth is gauged by the extent of your victory over external circumstances and environments, troubles and difficulties, adverse conditions and antagonistic influences. A yogi or a sage always keeps a balanced mind in all conditions of life. He stands on a firm base – the eternal, unchanging, immortal soul – and so he is called steadfast.

Muster all your strength and courage and every time you fall, rise up quickly and walk again with more zeal, boldness and cheerfulness. Allow every stumbling block to become a stepping stone to your spiritual transformation.



It is not the inner experience which determine the spiritual progress, but the basic personal attitude of serene living of the child disciple, which proves his or her worth.
(The Teachings of Kirpal Singh, v. 2, 95)



There are no windfalls as a general rule. You have to work your way up. Every one reaching the top step has ascended the steps below.
(Sant Kirpal Singh, ruhanisatsangusa.org/msg-xmas.htm)



The true Godman has been made, for at one time He was just like us.
(Sant Kirpal Singh, ruhanisatsangusa.org/poison.htm)



There are different stages through which one has to pass. To attempt to bypass any stage would make one short of development in that particular stage and eventually prolong final attainment. Let every one develop steadily and slowly.
(Sant Kirpal Singh, ruhanisatsangusa.org/drops.htm)



If we have ideas about how our practice should unfold, these will often get in the way, preventing us from honoring the phase that is actually with us.
(Jack Kornfield)



The Obstacles are the Path

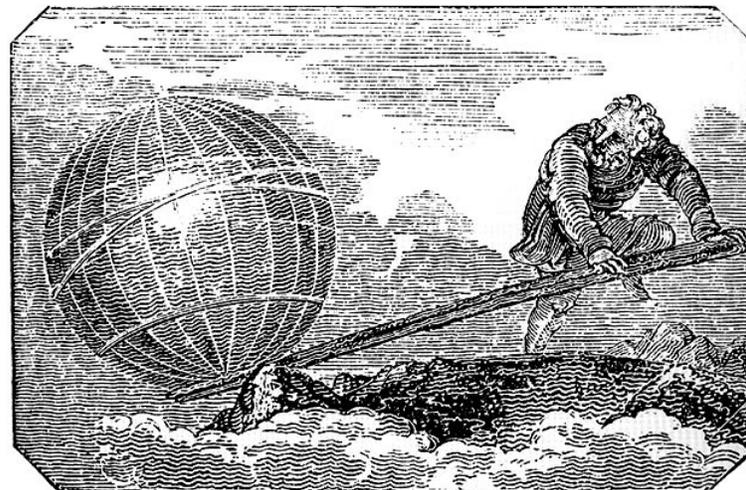
(<http://www.trainingforwarriors.com/2011/08/the-obstacle-is-the-path/>)

There was once a king that believed his kingdom could be on the decline as a result of the attitude of his people. To prove his theory that his people had lost inspiration, a king had a giant boulder placed on the only road into his city. Then, hidden and perched on a hill, he waited to see what would happen.

First, some merchants came upon the rock and said, “Well, this boulder is blocking our path. Let’s turn around and go home. No work today!” And they turned around and left.

Next a group of soldiers came upon the boulder. “This rock is blocking our path,” they said. “I guess no one will need our services today”, and they turned around and went home as well.

The king watched person after person continue to come upon the rock, see it as an impasse or excuse and turn and go home. That was, until an old man came upon the rock. Instead of becoming discouraged like the others, he got excited by the presence of such a challenge. He first examined the huge boulder and tried to push it with all his might. He realized this would not work and began to think of other solutions. Then the quote from ancient mathematician Archimedes popped into his head, “If you give me a large enough lever and a fulcrum on which to place it, I shall move the world.” The old man was instantly inspired, and found a long wooden pole. He placed the pole under the boulder and using leverage, moved the boulder slightly. He repeated this process until the boulder was completely off the road.



With his challenge finished, the inspired man was about to set off down the previously blocked path toward the city, but he noticed a bag lying where the boulder once stood. He looked around, picked up the bag and found inside a large amount of gold and a note. He carefully opened the note and read, "This gold is for you, since you know that great obstacles can lead to bigger opportunities." The king, happy with the actions of this man, left his hiding place and went back to his castle with hope for his people.

Like many Zen stories, at first, this may not to make sense, but upon deeper reflection it should start to be crystal clear. The story was used to remind you that taking the "easy way" is not always the best way. Oftentimes our own areas of weakness are not obstacles, but our biggest opportunities to learn and develop ourselves.

You see, all too often we wish that our lives were easier. We dream of hitting the lottery, getting more to do less, or that somehow we can live a life without trouble. I am here to tell you that it is actually the difficulty of life that makes life great!

Without the challenges, obstacles, troubles, tragedies, failures, mistakes, problems, dilemmas, conundrums, and even catastrophes, our lives would be less, not more. Once you come to understand this, you realize that the obstacle is the path.

I know what you might be thinking. You might believe that with less problems your life would be easier. Easier? Perhaps. Better? No. I believe that in most cases in life, people don't really want easier, they want better. They want to have more. As I have stated over and over to the athletes with which I work, "If you want to have more you have to become more!" The only way to get there is by overcoming the obstacles that will be in your way. There is nothing more famous than the athlete that eventually sees an injury to overcome as a blessing or the person that was made stronger mentally by passing through tough times. Embracing this concept will give you the courage to move forward when turmoil inevitably knocks on your door.

The warrior challenge of the week is actually an obstacle in itself. This week's challenge is to spend some time thinking about the biggest obstacle currently holding you back from what you want. You need to pick your main obstacle, attack it and pass it by. Once you have done this, pick out the next thing that stands in your way and attack again. I promise that if you keep this process up for the next year, the skills and traits you would develop would be amazing.

The key is identifying that obstacle and then having the courage to get on the path. The world and whatever you want from it can be yours as long as you are willing to go over, around, under or through enough obstacles. The key question is not what you really want, but how far are you willing to go to get there.



It's not hard to decide what you want your life to be about. What's hard is figuring out what you're willing to give up in order to do the things you really care about. (Shauna Niequist)



We should make all spiritual talk simple today; God is trying to sell you something, but you don't want to buy. That is what suffering is - your fantastic haggling, your manic screaming over the price! (Hafiz)



An intending disciple said to Dhu-L-Nun, the Egyptian mystic: "Above everything in this world I wish to enroll in the Path of Truth."

Dhu-L-Nun told him: "You can accompany our caravan only if you first accept two things. One is that you will have to do things which you do not want to do. The other is that you will not be permitted to do things which you desire to do. It is 'wanting' which stands between man and the Path of Truth."



If a man who beholds a lesser happiness beholds a greater one, let him leave aside the lesser to gain the greater. (Buddha)



You have to decide what your highest priorities are and have the courage - pleasantly, smilingly, non-apologetically - to say "no" to other things. And the way to do that is by having a bigger "yes" burning inside. (Stephen Covey)



Those who seek the easy way do not seek the True Way. (Dogen)



Obstacles on the Way

(innerfrontier.org/InnerWork/Archive/2011/20110530_Obstacles_Intro.htm)

When we start looking at our own inner and outer behaviors with a more objective view, we might see obstacles everywhere and be tempted to despair of ever making significant progress. Fortunately, very fortunately, our spiritual development does not depend on eradicating all, and perhaps not even any, of those obstacles. What is required is that we raise the level of our being, that we raise the level of our modes of perception and action.

Climbing to live in higher worlds cuts our attachment to the impediments that plagued us in our ordinary way of living. Spiritual practice is all about that climb.

Such a change of station frees us all at once, even from obstacles that we had not particularly addressed. So we are not embarking on a program of self-reform, which might never end, but rather on a path of transformation, integrating those very obstacles into our wholeness, so that our unbecoming impulses reframe themselves to serve rather than to take.

The issue for us now is that the obstacles slow our climbing, like so many weights encumbering us. They draw us out of ourselves and we vanish into attachment in these many ways. Indeed **what defines an obstacle is precisely its propensity to collapse our presence, to disturb the peace of our meditation, or to adulterate our prayer by making us feel unclean and unworthy.** We measure our life by these criteria, by how things affect our inner work.

Our inner work against or despite particular obstacles generates energy that we can turn toward more and deeper inner work. Choosing to forgo something you want to do or choosing to do something you do not want to do, can produce valuable inner energy.

There is on the one side our desire or aversion, and on the other side our choice to go against that desire or aversion. Like positive and negative electric charges held apart, this action sets up a field of energy within us.

If the power of the want is matched by the power of the choice to oppose it, that field engenders energy that we sorely need for our further inner work. If the want is strong and the choice is strong, the energy field is also strong. For that

reason, people with strong obstacles are not at a disadvantage when it comes to spiritual practice: those very obstacles, if handled well, can help them grow strong, not only in energy but also in will. Their will and their need are called upon to rise to meet the obstacles.

We need subtlety in understanding our spiritual impediments. It is easy to fall into defining as obstacles those aspects of ourselves that we do not like. That not-liking itself, though, is a hindrance, often coming from vanity, and that can lead us into endless programs of self-reform to make ourselves more acceptable to ourselves rather than to remove the difficulties hampering our inner work.

This is not to say that our motivations must be pure, because vanity and egoism inevitably insert themselves into so much of what we do and feel. But we do need to observe what actually blocks or diminishes our inner work, our ability to be present, our ability to worship wholeheartedly, our readiness to be kind. Then we focus on what our observations bring to light.

Each of us is unique, with our own set of obstacles. Notice also the crucial point that if we do not attempt to practice presence regularly, then we cannot see those processes that would hamper our presence. More inner work leads to more inner work. Less leads to less.

From the outset we also need to understand that overcoming our inner obstacles in no way means divorcing ourselves from parts of ourselves. We honor and respect our whole humanity, our own humanity, including the difficulties in our personal nature. Indeed, the source of all these obstacles can be attributed to their undoubted value in our survival-of-the-fittest path through the eons of evolution.

Our spiritual path, though, requires us to live and work with the whole of ourselves, to transform our hindering tendencies to assets, to unify our entire nature in service to the Real. So we are not intending to cut out of ourselves those tendencies that oppose our inner work: we need everything we have. But we are intending to bring all our tendencies, including the entire roiling sea of our contradictory impulses, under one umbrella, under our one unified, individual will.

So we befriend ourselves and work against our obstacles, usually to generate insight and energy, sometimes to make permanent changes, but always to enable ourselves to step along the way toward freedom, unity, and love.

Obstacles on the Spiritual Path

Sri Chinmoy

When we have entered into the life of aspiration and spirituality, the Supreme will not bring extra desires and impurities into our mind or life. It is He who has given us aspiration, so why should He give us desire, which is directly opposite to aspiration? No. He will not deliberately impede our progress in this way. These desires seem suddenly to appear, but they are not really new to us. They existed before in our life, but we did not notice them so much because our life was totally enveloped in a myriad of desires.

When we become conscious of the divine inner life, when we begin praying and meditating, we realize that desire is a tiger, a ferocious animal which we have been feeding and feeding, and we realize that we must not feed it anymore. Then our desires become enraged at us. They say, "All this time you were feeding us and we are most grateful, but now you have started starving us." Then all the frustrated desires form a league and attack us in every possible way, causing troubles with the family, friends, jobs, emotional relationships and so on.

While we are in the ordinary life there is no intensity. Today we have one desire, tomorrow four and the next day ten or twenty. But we are rarely intense even in trying to achieve and fulfill our own desires. Our desires are mere wishes. We do not have the capacity or the willingness to work to fulfill them. We want to be rich or famous or great or brilliant or beautiful, but far from working to achieve these desires, we will not even pray sincerely for their fulfillment.

When a seeker enters into the spiritual path, if he has not wholeheartedly accepted it, or if he is not far advanced, then during his meditation the same desires may come forward. He will begin to think, "This person is very rich, this person is very beautiful, this person has some good qualities which I do not have." While he is praying for Peace, Light and Bliss, one part of his being may be consciously and deliberately cherishing the desire to become a multimillionaire. At that time, the intensity of the seeker's meditation meets with these earthly desires. Then what happens? The intensity enters into the desires and makes them much stronger than they previously were.

Unconsciously or consciously we allow thoughts to come into us and the intensity of our meditation increases or strengthens them. But the Supreme has not given us these obstacles. He has given us the aspiration to pray for Peace, Light and Bliss. We have associated with desires for many, many years. When

we want to break off the connection, these old friends of ours say, “Where are you going? Why should we allow you to go into another room? Are you not satisfied with us? Even if you are not satisfied with us, you have eaten at our table. Now you have to pay the fee. We will not allow you to go.” They will fight with all their strength to bring us back to their domain. With great difficulty we came out of their room and entered into the aspiration-room. Then these desires come and flatter us. They make us feel that we do not need these aspiring qualities, that Peace is unreal, Light is unreal, Bliss is unreal. They say, “Don’t stay there. Come back to us, where everything is real. We shall fulfill you and you shall fulfill us.”

It is through the unillumined mind that desires try to approach us even after we have entered into the life of aspiration. The best thing we can do is never to allow any impurity in the form of desire, doubt, anxiety, jealousy or any unaspiring thoughts to enter our minds during meditation. If a desire comes to us while we are not meditating, it is not good to cherish it; but it is infinitely worse to cherish it during meditation. If we cherish desire or any impure thought during meditation, then we are simply strengthening the power of the negative forces and making our own spiritual journey more difficult.

If we go deep within, we can see each difficulty as a boon. Formerly we were alone with our difficulties. Now we have become conscious aspirants, so God’s Grace has entered into our lives. God’s Grace is constantly helping the seeker. It stands between the difficulty and the seeker. If one sees millions of difficulties when he sincerely enters into the spiritual life, then he can see them also as millions of blessings, because God’s Grace is in them, illumining them.

The sooner difficulties appear before us, the better, because we can surmount them right away. We should not be ungrateful to God, nor should we curse our fate when difficulties appear. We should be grateful that God has brought out all our impurities to be illumined and transcended as soon as possible. We have to face and conquer our enemies either today or tomorrow. By making ourselves worthy of God’s Compassion and Grace, we will easily be able to overcome our difficulties.

If we find fault with the Supreme’s Law or His way of operating, we are making a mistake. We have to feel that we are lucky, that we have entered into the spiritual life. Those who have not launched into the sea of spirituality, who are still wallowing in the pleasures of desire, do not even see the difficulties which surround them. They are totally satisfied with pleasure, which is always

followed by frustration. They do not know that there is something else that they need, which is God's inner Freedom, inner Light, inner Bliss. Those who are awakened should be pleased that they at least have the ability to see the goal ahead of them. If there are obstacles in their way, these obstacles cannot prevent them from running toward the Goal. (srichinmoylibrary.com/books/0160/1/4/index.html)



You need not dwell much on your personal character or impurities of mind. It amounts to self-pity... Although it is a very happy augury to be conscious of one's shortcomings, undue apprehension sometimes breeds morbidity which hampers progress. The conscious contacts with divinity within revolutionizes the thought pattern of the child disciple and he sees everything in much clearer perception. (*The Teachings of Kirpal Singh*, v. 2, 108)



Depression and despair breed in egoistic hearts. (*The Teachings of Kirpal Singh*, v. 2, 108)



Always brooding, "I am a sinner. I am a sinner" won't do. You are not a sinner; you have committed sin. You have besmeared yourself with filth. Wash it away. You are gold ore that comes from the mines. You are pure gold if you clean it (the filth) away. (*The Light of Kirpal*, 271)



The worst sin is to call yourself a sinner. For in that very thought you open the door, and invite sin to enter your mind. (Yogananda)



Have patience with all things, but chiefly have patience with yourself. Do not lose courage in considering your own imperfections, but instantly set about remedying them – every day begin the task anew. (Saint Francis de Sales)



Do not brood over failures, defects and mistakes. They will weaken your "will". Just reflect for a while why you have failed in the attempt and try to be careful in the second attempt. (Swami Sivananda)

God doesn't mind your imperfections: He minds your indifference. (Yogananda)



No one can ever gain strength by brooding over his weakness. (Paramananda)



Self-pity gets you nowhere. One must have the adventurous daring to accept oneself as a bundle of possibilities and undertake the most interesting game in the world - making the most of one's best. (Harry E. Fosdick)



Despair is the absolute extreme of self-love. It is reached when a man deliberately turns his back on all help from anyone else in order to taste the rotten luxury of knowing himself to be lost. (Thomas Merton)



One falls often, no doubt, but one becomes a good rider only after many a fall. (Sant Kirpal Singh)



To fall in sin is manly, but to remain there is devilish. (Sant Kirpal Singh)



Every saint has a past, every sinner a future. (Sant Kirpal Singh)



A saint is a sinner who never gave up. (Yogananda)



One mistake after another is also true practice. (Dogen)



Failure is the foundation of success, and the means by which it is achieved. (Lao-tzu)



If thou art a man, admire those who attempt great things, even though they fail.
(Seneca)



As a child learning to walk falls a thousand times before he can stand, and after that falls again and again until at last he can walk, so are we as little children before God. (Hazrat Inayat Khan)



The spiritual path is one of falling on your face, getting up, brushing yourself off, turning and looking sheepishly at God and then taking the next step.
(Sri Aurobindo)



Our greatest glory is not in never falling, but in rising every time we fall.
(Confucius)



To conduct great matters and never commit a fault is above the force of human nature. (Plutarch)



I know the path: it is straight and narrow. It is like the edge of a sword. I rejoice to walk on it. I weep when I slip. God's word is: "He who strives never perishes." I have implicit faith in that promise. Though, therefore, from my weakness I fail a thousand times, I shall not lose faith. (Mohandas Gandhi)



Many of life's failures are people who did not realize how close they were to success when they gave up. (Thomas Edison)



In great attempts it is glorious even to fail. (Vince Lombardi)



Being defeated is often a temporary condition. Giving up is what makes it permanent. (Marilyn vos Savent)



Defeat never comes to any man until he admits it. (Josephus Daniels)



There is no failure except in no longer trying. There is no defeat save your own inherent weakness of purpose. (Richard Pape)



Constant effort and frequent mistakes are the stepping stones to genius. (Elbert Hubbard)



Many of the insights of the saint stem from his experiences as a sinner. (Eric Hoffer)



Far better is it to dare mighty things, to win glorious triumphs, even though checkered by failure... than to rank with those poor spirits who neither enjoy nor suffer much, because they live in a gray twilight that knows not victory nor defeat. (Theodore Roosevelt)



The only man who never makes a mistake is the man who never does anything. (Theodore Roosevelt)



Satisfaction lies in the effort, not in the attainment. Full effort is full victory. (Mahatma Gandhi)



All I can do is engage with complete sincerity. Then, whatever happens, there is no regret. (The Dalai Lama)



The Horse and the Creaking Wheel

Baba Sawan Singh

A rider wanted to take his horse to drink water. Close by a Jat was working at his Persian wheel, so he took his horse there.

The creaking sound of the Persian wheel made the horse shy and it drew back. The rider thereupon asked the Jat to stop working the Persian wheel, and the fellow obeyed.

When the wheel stopped, he again took the horse to the gully into which the water had been flowing from the well, but by the time the horse reached there, all the water had run out.

The rider then requested the Jat to work the wheel again for a few minutes. The moment he did so, the horse again shied and drew back. This greatly annoyed the rider.

The Jat thereupon observed: "Well Sir, it is only during this creaking noise that you can get water for your horse."

The rider then whipped his horse and again brought it to the same place. The horse obeyed and drank his fill.

And the same is true of our mind. These worldly cares and anxieties will remain. Whatever you have to achieve, you will have to accomplish in the midst of these circumstances.



Every day you are given tasks which are intended to help your spiritual progress. Unfortunately, most people look for a very special assignment to be given to them by the Master personally before they accept it as a task from the Master. They do not see that their day-to-day dealings and behavior with other people in their work, the responsibilities they have to assume in their other mundane duties and how well they fulfill them, are all tasks given by the Master.

(Sant Kirpal Singh)



Baba Sawan Singh's Prayer

"Sir, can you give us an example of a good prayer?"
the Muslim gentleman asked Baba Sawan Singh.
In reply the Great Master said,

"If I were to pray, I would pray as follows: My Lord! I am ignorant,
I do not know what to ask of you. Give me that which you think best for me.
And give me the strength and wisdom to be happy about what you deem fit to
give me and about how and where you keep me.
I have no virtues, no devotion. My actions are all dark and sinful.
I possess no merits and my mind has thoroughly crushed me.
For a sinner like me, O Lord, there is no refuge but Thy Blessed Feet.
Please take me under Thy shelter. I want nothing more.
Make me Thy slave, that I may be Thine and Thou mayest be mine."



God's Grace

Rumi

You imagined that you would accomplish this task through your
own strength, activity, and effort.

This is the rule that has been established:
Expend everything you have in journeying on the Way.
Then the bounty will come to you.

On this endless road, you are commanded to travel with your own
feeble hands and feet.

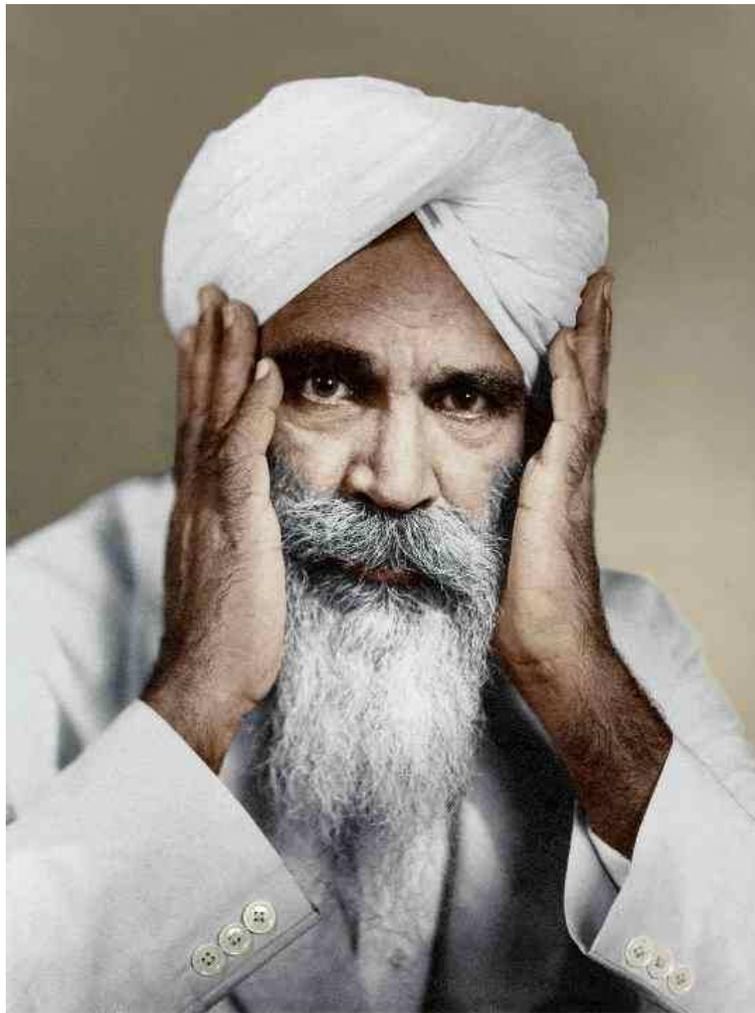
God knows that you cannot traverse this Way with feet so feeble.

Indeed, in a hundred thousand years you will not arrive
at the first way station.

However, when you travel this road until your legs are exhausted
and you fall down flat, until you have no more strength to move forward,
then God's grace will take you in its arms.



There is no doubt we are weak and have neither faith nor love,
but there is also one hope to sustain us – that He may take pity on us
and forgive our sins. We have taken refuge at His holy feet and,
deservedly or undeservedly, we are His children.
(Baba Sawan Singh)



Because of Your love I have broken with my past.
(Rumi)

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For more booklets go to: kirpalsingh.org
(Spiritual Quotations for Lovers of God)