

## Twenty-Five Ways to Become Chaste

By Susan Gammage <sup>1</sup>

Many youth have asked me for some practical guidance on how to become chaste, when their thoughts and the images in society around them are suffused in sex. Let's start by looking at some quotes, and then pull out a list of practical suggestions from the Bahá'í Writings on chastity.

### Helpful Quotes to Consider

We suggest you try to see it within the whole spectrum of the qualities that a Bahá'í must develop in his character. Be vigilant against temptation, but do not allow it to claim too great a share of your attention. You should concentrate, rather, on the virtues that you should develop, the services you should strive to render, and, above all, on God and His attributes, and devote your energies to living a full Bahá'í life in all its many aspects. (Universal House of Justice, Lights of Guidance, p. 364, #1220)

Certainly the problem confronting you is a difficult one. However, its solution lies within your power, for Bahá'u'lláh has assured us that God "will never deal unjustly with anyone, neither will He task a soul beyond its power." And again, "Whosoever he hath fulfilled the conditions implied in the verse: whoso maketh efforts for Us, he shall enjoy the blessings conferred by the words: 'In Our Way shall We assuredly guide him'". You can be confident that with the help of doctors, by prayer and meditation, by self-abnegation and by giving as much time as possible to serving the Cause in your community you can eventually succeed in overcoming your problem. (Universal House of Justice, Lights of Guidance, p. 366, #1227)

Such a chaste and holy life, with its implications of modesty, purity, temperance, decency, and clean mindedness, involves no less than the exercise of moderation in all that pertains to dress, language, amusements, and all artistic and literary avocations. It demands daily vigilance in the control of one's carnal desires and corrupt inclinations. It calls for the abandonment of a frivolous conduct, with its excessive attachment to trivial and often misdirected pleasures. (Shoghi Effendi: The Advent of Divine Justice, p. 30)

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To be afflicted this way in a great burden to a conscientious soul. But through the advice and help of doctors, through a strong and determined effort, and through prayer, a soul can overcome this handicap. (Shoghi Effendi, Lights of Guidance, p. 365, #1223)

When his life is oriented towards service to Baha'u'llah, and when every conscious act is performed within this frame of reference, he will not fail to achieve the true purpose of his life. Therefore, every believer must continually study the Sacred Writings and the instructions of the beloved Guardian, striving always to attain a new and better understanding of their import to him and to his society. He should pray fervently for divine guidance, wisdom and strength to do what is pleasing to God, and to serve Him at all times and to the best of his ability. (Universal House of Justice, Lights of Guidance, p.359, #1207)

Even though you feel that the conflict between sexuality and spirituality is more than you can bear, your affirmation "I do know I am a Bahá'í" is a positive factor in the battle you must wage. (Universal House of Justice, Lights of Guidance, p. 366, #1266)

Until a being setteth his foot in the plane of sacrifice, he is bereft of every favour and grace; and this plane of sacrifice is the realm of dying to the self. (Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, p. 76)

...The Bahá'í youth should, on the one hand, be taught the lesson of self-control which, when exercised, undoubtedly has a salutary effect on the development of character and of personality in general ... (Shoghi Effendi cited by the Universal House of Justice, Lights of Guidance, p. 361, #1214)

The Master said: turn your back to the darkness and your face to me. (Shoghi Effendi, The Unfolding Destiny, p. 457)

If you are sincerely intent on overcoming your problem, you must yourself determine to resist wayward impulses each time they arise and the House of Justice feels that there is no better way than to turn to the Writings to divert our thoughts into spiritual channels, perhaps to concentrate on what we may do to help others along the way to discovering the Bahá'í Faith. The more we occupy ourselves with teaching the Cause and serving our fellowman in this way, the stronger we become in resisting that which is abhorrent to our spiritual selves. (The Universal House of Justice, Lights of Guidance, p. 367, #1228)

Through sincere and sustained effort, energized by faith in the validity of the Divine Message, and combined with patience with oneself and the loving support of the Bahá'í community, individuals are able to effect a change in their behaviour; as a consequence of this effort they partake of spiritual benefits which liberate them and which bestow a true happiness beyond description. (The Universal House of Justice, Letters of The Universal House of Justice, 1993 Jun 05)

The Universal House of Justice lists "the loving support of the Bahá'í community as one of the elements through which "individuals are able to effect a change in their behaviour". (Universal House of Justice, 1993 Jun 05)

## Summary

Now that we've read the quotes, let's look at what they teach us about becoming chaste.

1. See it within the whole spectrum of the qualities that a Bahá'í must develop in his character.
2. Be vigilant against temptation, but do not allow it to claim too great a share of your attention.
3. You should concentrate on
  - the virtues that you should develop
  - the services you should strive to render
  - God and His attributes
4. Devote your energies to living a full Bahá'í life in all its many aspects
5. Self-abnegation (means self-rejection); dying to the self.
6. Exercise of moderation in all that pertains to
  - dress
  - language
  - amusements
  - all artistic and literary avocations
7. Daily vigilance in the control of one's carnal desires and corrupt inclinations
8. Abandonment of a frivolous conduct, with its excessive attachment to trivial and often misdirected pleasures.
9. Advice and help of doctors
10. Strong and determined effort
11. Life oriented towards service to Baha'u'llah and every conscious act is performed within this frame of reference; serve Him at all times and to the best of his ability; giving as much time as possible to serving the Cause

12. Study the Sacred Writings and the instructions of the beloved Guardian, striving always to attain a new and better understanding of their import to him and to his society.
13. Pray fervently for:
  - divine guidance
  - wisdom
  - strength to do what is pleasing to God
14. Affirmation "I do know I am a Baha'i"
15. Sacrifice
16. Loving support of the Bahá'í community
17. Self-control
18. Turn your back to the darkness and your face to me
19. Determine to resist wayward impulses each time they arise
20. Turn to the Writings to divert our thoughts into spiritual channels
21. Concentrate on what we may do to help others along the way to discovering the Bahá'í Faith (teaching)
22. Make a decision in choosing his way of life
23. Sincere and sustained effort
24. Faith in the validity of the Divine Message
25. Patience with oneself

Promise: whoso maketh efforts for Us, he shall:

- enjoy the blessings conferred by the words:
- 'In Our Way shall We assuredly guide him'".

Promise: When his life is oriented towards service to Baha'u'llah every conscious act is performed within this frame of reference, he will not fail to achieve the true purpose of his life.