

Dhikr

(Remembrance of Allah)

Dhikr (remembrance of Allah) is the greatest thing in our life and a well tried excellent method for purification of our heart. It eradicates all diseases from heart, produces in it the love of Allah and creates the consciousness of His Greatness; it brings us divine peace and satisfaction. Allah the Almighty Himself asked us to remember Him as much as possible. Says the Holy Quran:

" O ye who believes remember Allah very often and glorify Him morning and evening." (33:41-2)

Another verse says Quran says

" And when Salaat is finished then ye may disperse through the land and seek of the Bounty of Allah and celebrate the Praises of Allah much and often; they ye may prosper (here as well as in the next world.) (62-10)

In another verse the Holy Quran says the Dhikr imparts tranquility and peace to the mind and the soul.

" Behold in the Remembrance of Allah do hearts find satisfaction." (13-28)

In a verse, men of Faith have specifically been warned not to forget Dhikr by getting absorbed in the wealth and the family

" O ye who believe let not your riches or your children divert you from the Remembrance of Allah if any act thus, the loss is their own." (63:9)

Allah the Almighty shows His kindness to those who remember Him. He said:

" Then do ye remember Me I will remember you." (2-152)

The Holy Prophet (Sallallahu 'Alaihi Wasallam) says:

"Allah says when anyone remembers Me and his lips move in Dhikr I am by his side."

In a verse of the Holy Quran mentioning the qualities of pious servants and their reward, Allah says:

" Men whom neither traffic nor merchandise can divert from Remembrance of Allah nor from regular Salaat, nor from regular practice of Zakaat. (24-37)

To quote a few Hadith about Dhikr, the Holy Prophet (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) says:

" There is a polish for everything, for the hearts it is Dhikr of Allah."

He has also said:

" Those who remember Allah and those who do not are like those who are alive and those who are dead." (i.e. who remember Allah and celebrate, His praises are alive and those who do not are dead.)

The Holy Prophet (Sallallahu 'Alaihi Wasallam) was once asked who would be the most exalted among the servants of Allah on the Last Day, He (Sallallahu 'Alaihi Wasallam) replied

" Those who remember Allah, be they men or women."

The Holy Prophet (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) once advised one of his companions.

" Keep your tongue always employed in repeating the name of Allah."

Negligence towards Dhikr causes more and more retrogression. Those who close their hearts and tongues to Allah are deprived of all divine virtues, their hearts get hardened and they - become close associates of the devils. Look what the Holy Quran says:

" He who turns away from the remembrance of His Lord He will cause him to undergo a severe Penalty." (72-17)

In another verse it has been said:

" If anyone withdraws himself from the Remembrance of Allah Who is Most Gracious, He will appoint for him an evil one to be intimate companion to him" (43-36)

In another verse it has been said:

" Woe to those whose hearts are hardened against remembering of Allah, they are manifestly wandering" (39-22)

May Allah save us all from wandering

The highest and the required degree of Dhikr is to acquire such a solemn state of mind and heart in which we remain continuously full of remembrance of Allah and be never without His thought. The state of permanent and all pervading God's consciousness is achieved only through continuously engaging the tongue and heart in Dhikr and devout servant of Allah no doubt, achieve this state. The daily five Salaats are no doubt the remembrance of Allah but Dhikr has got a wider sense. It includes all sorts of the praises, be they with tongue or heart i.e. Salaats, the recitation of Holy Quran, the other prayers, the repetition His sacred names and devoted contemplation on the signs of Allah and the like come under Dhikr.

We are surrounded by evil forces that are trying to deviate us from the right path. To save ourselves from their grips we must remember Allah in every possible way. The more we remember Him the more benefited we are. The real Dhiker is that in whatever profession, state or circumstances a Muslim may be, he should do his best to observe the commands of Allah that are intended for such a situation

" O ye who believe ! Let not your wealth and your children distract you from remembrance of Allah. (63:9)

Thus whoever observes the commandments of Allah applicable to any given time under all circumstances and observe his responsibilities toward his family and in other worldly affairs like buying and selling, carries out the Dhikr of Allah even while engaged in them.

The Methods of Dhikr, Remembrance of Allah

There are a number of hadiths which are directly relevant to the methods of dhikr used by various Sufi turuq. I have grouped them below, under the titles "**Posture is Irrelevant to Dhikr**," "**Dhikr in Assembly and in a Circle**," "**Dhikr Saying `La ilaha illa Allah**," "**Dhikr by saying `Allah**," and "**No Limits to doing Dhikr**."

Posture is Irrelevant to Dhikr

The Qur'an says in meaning:

Lo! In the creation of the Heavens and the earth and in the night and day are tokens (of His sovereignty) for men of understanding, such as remember Allah, in standing, sitting, and reclining. [Qur'an 3:190-191]
What this part of the Qur'an establishes is that posture is not important in performing dhikr - standing, sitting, or reclining. Presumably other postures are also okay, so criticisms about posture during dhikr is irrelevant.

Dhikr in Assembly and in a Circle

The following ahadith is about those Sahaba who did dhikr in assembly and in a circle, and were praised by Rasulullah (s.a.w.) for it:

Hadhrat Abu Sa`eed Khudri relates that once Hadhrat Mu`awiyah visited the mosque and saw a **circle** (of reciters). He asked,

"What has made you sit?"

They said, "We have assembled here to remember Allah."

He [Mu`awiyah] said, "By Allah you did not sit except for this purpose?"

They affirmed, "We did not sit except for this."

Hadhrat Mu`awiyah then told them, "I did not ask you to swear on account of any malice. None of you can match me for scanty narration of the Prophet (s.a.w.) (and as such have narrated very few traditions about him). The Holy Prophet (s.a.w.) once visited a gathering of his companions and inquired,

`What has made you assemble here?'

They answered, 'We have gathered to remember Allah and praise Him for having led us to Islam and granted this favour to us.'

The Holy Prophet (s.a.w.) inquired, 'Do you affirm by Allah that it is so?'

The Holy Prophet's Companions affirmed, 'By Allah we are sitting here for this purpose only.'

He [the Prophet s.a.w.] said, 'I have not put you on oath on account of any doubt, but angel Jibreel had visited me and told me that Allah felt proud of you among the angels.'

[From Sahih Muslim, and also in the Riyadh us-Saliheen of Imam Nawawi.]

Here is another hadith, which shows the benefit of doing dhikr in assembly.

Ibn `Umar reported, "The Prophet, peace be upon him, said, 'When you pass by a garden of paradise, avail yourselves of it.' The Companions asked, 'What are the gardens of Paradise, O Messenger of Allah?' The Prophet, peace be upon him, replied, 'The assemblies of dhikr. There are some angels of Allah who go about looking for such assemblies of dhikr, and when they find them they surround them.'"

[Quoted from Fiqh us-Sunnah compiled by As-Sayyid Sabiq, vol. 4, ch. 6.]

There is also this important hadith about dhikr in general, and dhikr in an assembly:

On the authority of Abu Hurayrah (may Allah be pleased with him), who said that the Prophet (may the blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said: Allah the Almighty says:

I am as My servant thinks I am. I am with him when he makes mention of Me. If he makes mention of Me to himself, I make mention of him to Myself; and if he makes mention of Me in an assembly, I make mention of him in an assembly better than it. And if he draws near to Me a hand's span, I draw near to him an arm's length; and if he draws near to Me an arm's length, I draw near to him a fathom's length. And if he comes to Me walking, I go to him at speed.

[It was related by al-Bukhari, and also by Muslim, at-Tirmidhi and Ibn Majah. From "Forty Hadith Qudsi," selected and translated by Ezzeddin Ibrahim and Denys Johnson-Davies (Dar Al-Koran Al-Kareem, Lebanon, 1980), hadith no. 15.]

Doing Dhikr by saying "La ilaha illa Allah"

One of the ways of doing dhikr is by saying "La ilaha illa Allah." Here are some hadiths which mention this....

Hazrat Jabir relates that he heard the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.) having said:

"The best remembrance of Allah is `La ilaha illa Allah.'"

[From Tirmidhi, also related in the Riyadh us-Saliheen of Imam Nawawi]

Another hadith about saying `La ilaha illa Allah' for dhikr is this....

Abu Hurairah reported that the Prophet, peace be upon him, said, "Renew your faith." "How can we renew our faith?" they asked. The Prophet, peace be upon him, said, "Say always, `La ilaha illa Allah'." [From Ahmad, with a sound isnad. Quoted in Fiqh us-Sunnah compiled by as-Sayyid Sabiq, vol. 4, ch. 6.]

Doing Dhikr by saying "Allah"

Regarding using the names of Allah in dhikr, the hadith I am aware of at present regarding this topic is the following....

The Prophet said, "The Hour will not arise before `Allah, Allah' is no longer said on earth."

[Sahih Muslim]

No Limits to doing Dhikr

Now, some criticize those on the Sufi path for doing *too much* dhikr. However, Ibn Abbas (r.a.) is related as having said there is no limit to dhikr.

The following quote I took from the book "Fiqh us-Sunnah" by as-Sayyid Sabiq. The saying of Ibn Abbas goes....

Ali b. Abi Talha relates that Ibn Abbas said, "All obligations imposed upon man by Allah are clearly marked and one is exempted from them in the presence of a genuine cause. The only exception is the obligation of dhikr. Allah has set no specific limits for it, and under no circumstances is one allowed to be negligent of it. We are commanded to `remember Allah standing, sitting, and reclining on your sides,' [Qur'an 3:191] in the morning, during the day, at sea or on land, on journey or at home, in poverty and in prosperity, in sickness or in health, openly and secretly,

and, in fact, at all times throughout one's life and in all circumstances." Dhikr is a very blessed practice, praised in the Qur'an and hadiths.

May Allah help bring us satisfaction in our hearts through remembrance of Him.

Say: "Truly Allah leaves to stray whom He will, but He guides to Himself those who turn to Him in penitence -- Those who believe, and whose hearts find satisfaction in the remembrance of Allah, for *without doubt in the remembrance of Allah do hearts find satisfaction.* [Qur'an 13:27-28]

Dhikr is a form of worship that comes after the ritual Prayer (salah) and reading Qur'an in importance. While salah has to be performed at certain times and under certain conditions of purity, *dhikr* can be made any time, any place. It can be done by repeating certain formulas to extol and praise Allah, or it can be just thoughts of Allah in one's heart.

Islam does not require anyone to torture himself in order to reach a high stage of spirituality. Nor does he have to shun everything of this world. Rather, one can be close to Allah (God) by frequently remembering Him with his lips and heart, even as he is busy with his daily tasks.

Dhikr can also take a more distinct form such as *tasbeeh*, which is extolling Allah. This is usually done by counting on the fingers or on prayer beads (called *sibhah*) and repeating phrases such as "Subhan Allah" (Allah is Sublime), "Al-Hamdulillah" (all praise to Allah) and "Allahu Akbar" (Allah is Greatest) thirty-three times each. Then the Muslim says, "*Laa ilaha illa Allah. Wahdhu. La Shirika lahu. Lahu al-mulk, wa lahu al-hamd, wa hua 'ala kulli shay'in qadeer.*" (There is no god but Allah. He is One. He has no partner. To Him is the dominion and all praise, and He has power over all things.)

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