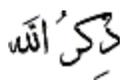


Dhikr - Remembrance of God



Dhikr is the means by which Stations yield their fruit, until the seeker reaches the Divine Presence. On the journey to the Divine Presence the seed of remembrance is planted in the heart and nourished with the water of praise and the food of glorification, until the tree of dhikr becomes deeply rooted and bears its fruit. It is the power of all journeying and the foundation of all success. It is the reviver from the sleep of heedlessness, the bridge to the One remembered.

The shaikhs strive to remember their Lord with every breath, as the angels are always in the state of dhikr, praising Allah. One of our shaikhs said, "I remembered You because I forgot You for a moment, and the easiest way for me is to remember You on my tongue." If the seeker will mention his Lord in every moment, he will find peace and satisfaction in his heart, he will uplift his spirit and his soul, and he will sit in the Presence of his Lord. The Prophet (s) said in an authentic hadith mentioned in Ahmad's Musnad, "The people of Dhikr are the people of My presence." So the gnostic is the one who keeps the dhikr in his heart, and leaves behind the attachments of the lower worldly life.

Mention of Dhikr in the Qur'an

Dhikr is mentioned in many places in the Holy Qur'an, and in most verses, what was meant by the word dhikr is *tasbih*, glorifying; *takbir*, exalting; *tahmid*, praising; and praising and praying upon the Prophet (s).

Allah said in Surat al-Baqara, 152: "Remember Me and I will remember you." [2:152]

He said in Surat ali ^cImran, 41, "...and remember your Lord much and glorify Him in the evening and in the early morning." And again, 191, "Those who remember Allah while standing, sitting, and lying on their sides..." [3:41, 191]

He said in Surat al-Ra^cd, 28, "Those who believe, and whose hearts find their rest in the remembrance of Allah--for, verily, in the remembrance of Allah hearts do find their rest." [13:28]

And He said in Surat al-Ah zab, 35, "...and men who remember Allah much and women who remember Him..." And again, 41,42, "O you who believe! Remember Allah with much remembrance; and glorify Him morning and evening." [33: 35, 41-42]

There are many, many other verses of Qur'an mentioning dhikr. Imam Nawawi said in his book, "*Futahat ar-Rabbani 'ala-l- Adhkar an-Nawawiyya*," vol. 1, p. 106-109, "All scholars of Islam have agreed on the acceptance and permissibility of Dhikr by heart and by tongue, for the adult men and women, for children, for the one who has ablution, and for the one without ablution; even for the woman during her menses. Moreover, dhikr is allowed by all scholars in the form of *tasbih*, *tahmid*, *takbir* and praising and praying for the Prophet (s)."

Dhikr polishes the heart and is the source of the Divine breath that revives the dead spirits by filling them with the Blessings of Allah, decorating them with His Attributes, and bringing them from a state of heedlessness to the state of complete wakefulness. If we keep busy with Dhikrullah, happiness and peace will be granted to us. Dhikr is the key to happiness, the key to joy, and the key to Divine Love.

Mention of Dhikr in the Sunnah

According to Bukhari, Abu Musa al-Ash'ari related that the Prophet (s) said, "The difference between the one who makes dhikr and the one who doesn't make dhikr is like the difference between the living and the dead."

Tirmidhi narrated from Anas (r) that the Prophet (s) said, "If you pass by the Paradises of Heavens stay there." They asked, "Ya Rasul-Allah, what are the Paradises of Heavens?" He said, "The associations of Dhikr!"

Bukhari narrated in his book from Abu Huraira that the Prophet (s) said, "Allah, Almighty and Exalted, has angels who seek the people of Dhikr. If they find the people of Dhikr they encompass them until they reach the first heaven. And Allah asks his angels, 'What are my servants doing?' The angels say, 'O Allah, they are praising You and glorifying You and they are making Dhikr.' Allah says, 'Did they see Me?' The angels answer, 'No, they didn't see You.' Then Allah asks, 'How would it be if they were to see Me?' The angels reply, 'O Allah, if they were to see You, they would be making more praise of You and more glorification of You and more Dhikr of You.' And Allah asks 'What are they asking for?' The angels say, 'They are asking for Your Paradise.' Allah asks, 'Did they see My Paradise?' The angels answer, 'No, Our Lord.' Allah continues, 'How would it be if they saw My Paradise?' The angels reply, 'They would be more attracted and more eager to reach it.' Then Allah asks them, 'Of what are they afraid?' And the angels say, 'They are afraid of hellfire.' and Allah asks, 'How would it be if they saw my Hellfire?' and they reply, 'They would be running more and more away from it and asking more and more protection from it.' Then Allah said, 'I am making you all My witnesses: that I am forgiving them of all their sins.' Then one angel asked, 'O our Lord, there is among these people one who is not from them, he came only to ask for something

from one of them.' Allah said, 'Those are my beloved ones who are making My Dhikr. Anyone who comes into their circle will be forgiven, and I am forgiving him.'"

In Bukhari and Muslim it is narrated from Abu Huraira that the Prophet (s) said, "As my servant thinks about Me so will I be for him. I am with him if he will remember Me. If he calls on Me in himself I will call him in Myself, and if he calls on Me in a group of people, I mention him in a better group in My presence. If he approaches Me one handspan, I will approach him one arm's length; if he approaches Me one arm's length, I will approach him by a cubit; if he comes to Me walking, I will come to him running."

Tirmidhi and Ibn Majah narrated on the authority of Abi Darda that the Prophet said, "Do you want me to tell you of your best deeds, and the most honored and praised and sanctified to Your Lord, and the highest in its reward; better than spending gold and better than meeting your enemy and cutting their necks in the jihad?" They said, "Yes, Ya Rasulallah." He said, "Dhikrullah."

The Prophet (s) said, "Everything has its polish and the polish of hearts is dhikrullah."

Mu'adh bin Jabal (r) said, "Nothing saves you from Allah's punishment except Dhikrullah."

There are many, many other hadith about the benefits and blessings of Dhikr such that it is impossible to quote all of them here.

From the Sayings of Imams and Scholars about Dhikr

Ibn ʿAbbas (r) said "Allah, Almighty and Exalted, put a limit on all the obligations that He ordered human beings except for Dhikr. For it there is no limit."

Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya said in his book, *Al-Wabil as-Sa'ib*, p. 52, "There is no doubt that the heart oxidizes, just as copper and silver oxidize. Its polishing is the dhikr, which will make it like a white mirror. The oxidation of the heart is due to heedlessness and sin. Its polishing is by means of two actions: repentance and dhikr. If someone's heart is cloudy, the reflections of images will be unclear, he will see falsehood as truth and truth in the image of falsehood (*batil*). When there is too much oxidization on the heart, the heart will be darkened, and in the darkness the images of the Truth and Reality never appear. The best way to polish it is through Dhikrullah."

Ibn ʿAta'illah as-Sakandari said, "By Dhikr you leave behind heedlessness and forgetfulness, and you keep your heart Present with Allah, Almighty and Exalted. The

best way to approach His Presence is by reciting the name 'Allah,' in the heart or on the tongue, or by reciting any of His Names." [*Miftah al-Falah*, p. 4]

Abul Qasim al-Qushayri said, "Dhikr is the strongest support in the way of Allah, 'Azza wa Jall. No one can reach the Divine Presence except by continuing to recite Dhikr." [*Risalat al-Qushayriyya*]

Mulay al-^cArabi ad-Darqawi said, "Do not say, 'I am nothing'; neither say, 'I am something.' Do not say: 'I need such and such a thing'; nor yet: 'I need nothing.' But say: 'Allah,' and you will see marvels." [*Letters of a Sufi Master*]

We see from what has been mentioned that all guides and perfect shaikhs advised the seeker in the Way of Allah to make continuous dhikr in all states of their lives and to keep the company of the people in associations of Dhikr. We see that the Holy Qur'an and the Sunnah of the Prophet (s) and the scholars are all in accordance on this matter.

The Types of Dhikr

Dhikr can be done both silently or aloud. The Prophet (s) encouraged people to do both kinds. Among the scholars of shari'ah and the Sufi shaikhs, some preferred the loud dhikr and some preferred the silent dhikr.

Loud Dhikr

Bukhari narrated that Abu Huraira (r) reported that the Prophet (s) said, "If My servant mentions Me in himself, I will mention him in Myself. If he mentions Me in a group, I will mention him in a group in My presence." We understand from this hadith that to mention Allah in a group indicates loud dhikr. Some scholars determined from this that using loud dhikr is permitted.

Bukhari narrated in his book of hadith, that Ibn 'Abbas (r) said, "In the time of the Prophet (s) the people used to raise their voices in Dhikr."

Bukhari narrated in his book of hadith, that Abu Ma'bad (r), the freed slave of Ibn 'Abbas (r), said: "Ibn 'Abbas told me, 'In the lifetime of the Prophet (s), it was the custom to celebrate Allah's praises aloud after the obligatory congregational prayers.'" Ibn 'Abbas (r) continued, "When I heard the Dhikr, I would know that the congregational prayer had ended."

Imam Ahmad, Abu Dawud and Tirmidhi related that as-Sa'ib (r) reported that the Prophet (s) said, "Jibril came to me and ordered me to order my Companions to raise their voices in takbir."

It is narrated by Bukhari and Muslim and mentioned by Jalaluddin as-Suyuti, from other collections, that 'Ali bin Abi Talib (r) said, "I asked the Prophet (s) one time, 'O Messenger of Allah, guide me to the shortest way to Allah's Presence, and the easiest way to worship, and the best way for Allah, Almighty and Exalted. The Prophet (s) said, 'O 'Ali, you have to be continuously making Dhikrullah, silently and aloud.' I replied, 'O Prophet (s), all human beings are making dhikr. Give me something special.' The Prophet (s) said, 'O 'Ali, the best of what I, and all prophets before me, said is, *la ilaha illallah*. If all the heavens and earth were placed on one side of the balance and *la ilaha illallah* were placed in the other, *la ilaha illallah* would be heavier. Judgment Day will never come as long as there are people on this earth saying *la ilaha illallah*.' Then I said, 'How should I recite.' The Prophet (s) said, 'Close your eyes and listen to me reciting *la ilaha illallah* three times. Then you say it three times and I will listen to you.' Then the Prophet (s) said it and I repeated it in a loud voice."

In the narration of Imam Ahmad and Tabarani this hadith is continued, describing how the Prophet taught his Companions the dhikr. "Ibada bin Samit said that the Prophet (s) said, 'Is there any stranger among you?' And we said, 'No, Ya Rasul-Allah.' He said, 'Close the door.' Then he said, 'Raise your hand and repeat after me *La ilaha illallah*' We raised our hand and said, *la ilaha illallah*. Then the Prophet (s) said, 'Praise be to Allah that He sent me to this world with this kalimah, and He ordered me with it, and He promised me the Paradise with it, and He never changes His Promise.' Then the Prophet (s) said, 'Be happy! Allah has forgiven you.'"

Jalaladin as-Suyuti mentioned in an article called "*Natijat al-Fikr fi Jahri-dh-Dhikr*," the *Benefits of Loud Dhikr*, twenty-five authentic hadiths which mention doing loud dhikr.

Silent Dhikr

Allah mentioned in Surat al-A'raf, 205, "And remember thy Lord in thy self with humility and fear, and without loudness of speech, in the mornings and evenings; and be not of the neglectful." [7:205]

Imam Ahmad narrated, "Abu Huraira reported that the Prophet (s) said that Allah says, 'I am with my servant when he remembers Me and by his remembrance of Me his lips move.'" Commenting on this hadith, Imam Nawawi said, "Allah is with the one who remembers Him and calls Him in his heart, and calls Him on his tongue, but we must realize that the dhikr of the heart is more perfect. The rememberer made dhikr of the tongue in order to reflect the occurrence of the dhikr in his heart. When the love of Allah and His Remembrance overwhelms the heart and the spirit, the tongue is moved and the seeker brought near."

Sheikh Amin al-Kurdi said in *The Enlightenment of Hearts (Tanwir al-Qulub)* p. 522: "The *dhikr* by tongue, which combines sounds and letters, is not easy to perform at all times, because buying and selling and other such activities altogether divert one's attention from such *dhikr*. The contrary is true of the *dhikr* by heart, which is named that way in order to signify its freedom from letters and sounds. In that way nothing distracts one from his *dhikr*, as the poet says:

With the heart remember Allah, secretly from creation, wordlessly and speechlessly.

That remembrance is best of all: out of it flowed the sayings of the saints.

"That is why our Naqshbandi masters have chosen the *dhikr* of the heart. Moreover, the heart is the place where the Forgiver casts his gaze, and the seat of belief, and the receptacle of secrets, and the source of lights. If it is sound, the whole body is sound, and if it is unsound, the whole body is unsound, as was made clear for us by the chosen Prophet (s).

"Something that confirms this was narrated on the authority of 'A'isha (r): 'Allah favors *dhikr* above *dhikr* seventyfold (meaning, silent *dhikr* over loud *dhikr*). On the Day of Resurrection, God will bring back human beings to His account, and the Recording Angels will bring what they have recorded and written, and Allah Almighty will say: See if something that belongs to my servant was left out? The angels will say: We left nothing out concerning what we have learnt and recorded, except that we have assessed it and written it. Allah will say: O my servant, I have something good of yours for which I alone will reward you, it is your hidden remembrance of Me.' Bayhaqi narrated it.

"Also on the authority of 'A'isha: 'The *dhikr* not heard by the Recording Angels equals seventy times the one they hear.' Bayhaqi narrates it."

Allah Knows Best.