

Polishing the Hearts
By Imaam ibn al-Qayyim

AllahIt is an Arabic term and is the most correct name for the one true God (Almighty). The term 'Allah' is derived from Al-Ilaah and means literally 'The One', 'The God' or 'The One God'. - the Most High - said: {O you who believe! Remember Allah and remember Him a lot.} [SoorahA chapter/section of the Qur'aan. al-Ahzaab 33:41].

{Those men and women who remember Allah a lot.} [Soorah al-Ahzaab 33:35].

{So when you have finished the rights of your Pilgrimage, then remember Allah as you remember your fore-father, or with more intense remembrance.} [Soorah al-Baqarah 2:200].

These verses contain a command to remember Allah intensely and abundantly, since the worshipper is in dire need of [remembering Allah] and cannot do without it even for a twinkling of an eye.

This is because every moment that a person does not spend in the *dhikr* (remembrance) of Allah will not be of any benefit to him. Rather, the harm entailed in being neglectful of the *dhikr* of Allah is far greater than any benefits that can be gained. One of the *'aarifeen* (those who are knowledgeable about Allah) said:

"If a person were to spend such and such number of years engaged [in the *dhikr* of Allah], then he turns away from it for just a moment, what he will lose is far greater than whatever he has already gained."

Al-Bayhaqee relates from 'Aaishah [radiallaahu 'anhaa] that the Prophet [sallallaahu 'alayhi waand sallam] said:

"There is no time in which the son of Aadam does not remember AIIaah in it, except that it will be a source of regret for him on the Day of Judgement." (2)

Mu'aadh ibnSon (of) jabal [radiallaahu 'anhu] relates that the Prophet [sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam] said: "The people of Paradise will not have any regrets except for those moments in which they were not engaged in the *dhikr* (remembrance) of Allah." (3)

Mu'aadh ibn Jabal also relates that AllaahIt is an Arabic term and is the most correct name for the one true God (Almighty). The term 'Allah' is derived from Al-Ilaah and means literally 'The One', 'The God' or 'The One God'.'s Messenger [sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam] was asked: "What action is the most beloved to Allah?" So he replied: "That you continue to keep your tongue moist with the *dhikr* of Allah, until you die." (4)

POLISHING THE HEART

Abu Dardaa radiallaahu 'anhu said:

"For everything there is a polish and the polish for the heart is the *dhikr* of Allah".

Al-Bayhaqee relates from Ibn 'Umar radiallaahu 'anhu that Allaah's Messenger [sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam] said: "For everything there is a polish, and the polish for the hearts is the

dhikr (remembrance) of Allah. There is nothing more potent in saving a person from the punishment of Allah than the *dhikr* of Allah." It was said: "Not even *Jihaad* in the path of Allah?" So he replied: "Not even if you were to continue striking with your sword until it breaks." (5)

There is no doubt that hearts become rusty just as copper and silver coins become rusty. The polish for [this rust] is the *dhikr* of Allaah. This is because [*dhikr*] is like a polish [which polishes the heart] like a shiny mirror. When *dhikr* is left, the rust returns. But when *dhikr* resumes, then the heart is [again] polished.

And hearts become rusty due to two things:-

- (i) neglecting remembering Allah, and
- (ii) committing sins.

The polish for these two things is:-

- (i) seeking Allaah's forgiveness and
- (ii) *dhikr*.

CONFUSING TRUTH WITH FALSEHOOD

Whoever neglects [remembering Allah] most of the time, then his heart will become rusty in accordance with how neglectful the person is. And when this [filthy] rust accumulates on the heart, then it no longer recognises things as they really are. Thus, it views falsehood as if it is the truth, and truth as if it is falsehood. This is because this rust darkens and confuses the heart's perception, and so it is unable to truly recognise things for what they really are. So as the rust accumulates, the heart gets blackened, and as this happens the heart becomes stained with this filthy rust, and when this occurs it corrupts the heart's perception and recognition of things. The heart [then] does not accept the truth nor does it reject falsehood, and this is the greatest calamity that can strike the heart. Being neglectful [of *dhikr*] and following of whims and desires is a direct consequence of such a heart, which [further] extinguish the heart's light and blinds its vision. Allah - the Most High - said:

{And do not obey him whose heart We have made to be neglectful of Our remembrance, one who follows his own whims and desires and whose affairs are furat [have gone beyond bounds and whose deeds have been lost].} [Soorah al-Kahf 18:28].

QUALITIES OF A GUIDE

So when a worshipper desires to follow another person, then let him see: Is this person from the people of *dhikr*, or from the people who are negligent [about remembering Allah]? Does this person judge in accordance with his whims and desires, or by the Revelation? So, if he judges by whims and desires then he is actually from those people who are negligent; those whose affairs have gone beyond bounds and whose deeds are lost.

The term *furat* [which occurs in the above verse] has been explained in many ways. It has been explained to mean:-

- (i) losing the rewards of that type of action which is essential to do, and in which lies

success and happiness;

(ii) exceeding the limits of something;

(iii) being destroyed; and

(iv) opposing the truth. Each of these sayings are very close in meaning to each other.

The point is that Allah - the One free from all imperfections, the Most High - has prohibited following all those who possess such attributes. So it is absolutely essential that a person considers whether such attributes are found in his [shaykhScholar or old man. Usually used as a title of respect.](#), or the person who's example he follows, or the person that he obeys. If they are, then he should distance himself from such a person. However, if it is found that the person is, in most cases, pre-occupied with the *dhikr* of Allah and with following the [SunnahWay/method/saying or deed of the Prophet Muhammad \(peace be upon him\).](#), and his affairs do not exceed the limits, but rather he is judicious and resolute in his affairs, then he should cling to him very firmly.

Indeed, there is no difference between the living and the dead, except with the *dhikr* of Allah; since [the Prophet sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam] said: "The example of one who remembers Allah and someone who does not, is like the example between the living and the dead."(6)

FOOTNOTES

1. AI-Waabilus-Sayyib min Kalimit-Tayyib (pp.78-82).
2. [HasanSound, agreeable and good. In this science of Hadeeth, according to Al-Khattabi \(d. 388\): "It is the one \(i.e. the Hadeeth\) where its source is known and its reporters are unambiguous."](#) : Related by Abu Nu'aym in al-Hiliyatul-Awliyaa (51361-362). It was authenticated by Shaykh al-Albaanee in Saheehul-Jaami' (no.5720).
3. [SaheehAuthentic, Correct and Sound.](#) : Related by Ibnus-Sunnee in 'Aml al-Yawma wal-Laylah (no.3). Refer to Saheehul-Jaami' (no.5446).
4. Hasan: Related by Ibn Hibbaan (no.2318). It was authenticated by Shaykh Saleem al-Hilaalee in Saheeh al-Waabilus-Sayyib (p.80).
5. Saheeh: Related by Ahmad (4/352), from Mu'aadh ibn Jabal radiallaahu 'anhu. It was authenticated by al-Albaanee in Saheehul-Jaami' (no.5644).
6. Related by al-Bukhaaree (11/208) and Muslim (1/539).

So what is Dhikr? Sounds like a cool word. Dhikr, looks pretty neat in Arabic script.

Dhikr, according to the book [FighIslamic Jurisprudence.](#) -Us-[SunnahWay/method/saying or deed of the Prophet Muhammad \(peace be upon him\).](#) by Sheik Sayyed As Sabeeq, mentions that, "All words of praise and glory to AllahIt is an Arabic term and is the most correct name for the one true God (Almighty). The term 'Allah' is derived from Al-Ilaah and means literally 'The One','The God' or 'The One God'.", extolling His Perfect Attributes of Power and Majesty, Beauty and Sublimeness, whether one utters them by tongue or says them silently in one's heart, are known as Dhikr or remembrance of Allah."

Allah is so great, every time I see the glittering stars in the sky, resembling diamonds and pearls, I call to mind the greatness of Allah. Every time I see the various creatures Allah has created I reflect upon the greatness of Allah, the rainbow-colored parrots in the Amazon Forest, the birds how they soar so high in the sky only by the will of Allah.

I have been given the chance to be able to work for Paradise, shelter and clothing, having a mother and father, the ability to communicate with relatives and friends across the world using e-mail, and the greatest blessing- the religion Allah has chosen for me, Islam!

These are just some of the things Allah has blessed me with, and if I were to try and name and count all of them, it would be impossible. Just take a moment, try to name all the blessings Allah has bestowed on you, and you will know what I mean.

Don't you agree that remembering Allah is the least you could do in order to acknowledge the gifts and blessings He has bestowed you with?

Remembering Allah is the foundation of good deeds. The more we remember Allah, the closer we will get to Him. You can see that our greatest example, Prophet Mohammed (peace and blessings be upon him), used to remember Allah at all times. So you know Dhikr is good, but what do you get in return for remembering Allah?

"Verily, the Muslims (those who submit to Allah in Islam) men and women... (up to)... And the men and the women who remember Allah much with their hearts and tongues. Allah has prepared for them forgiveness and a great reward (i.e., [JannahParadise](#))." (33:35)

The difference between the one who makes Dhikr and the one who does not is well explained in this [HadithProphetic Narration](#). Abu Musa Al-Ash`ari (may Allah be pleased with him) reported: The Prophet said, "The similitude of one who remembers his Lord and one who does not remember Him, is like that of the living and the dead." (Al-Bukhari and Muslim).

All right, so we know what Dhikr means and why we should do it. Here are some more specific things we can say to remember Allah.

Abu Huraira reported that the Prophet said, "I love repeating *Subhan Allah , Walhamdu lillah , waand La ilaha ill-Allah, wa Allahu Akbar* (Glorified is Allah, all praise is due to Allah, and there is no God but Allah, Allah is the greatest) more than all that the sun shines upon." (Muslim and Tirmidhi).

Abu Huraira reported: The Messenger of Allah said, "He who recites after every prayer: *Subhan Allah* (Allah is free from imperfection) 33 times; *Alhamdu lillah* (praise be to Allah) 33 times; *Allahu Akbar* (Allah is Greatest) 33 times; and completes the hundred with: *La ilaha illallahu, wahdahu la sharika lahu, lahul-mulku wa lahul-hamdu, wa Huwa `ala kulli shai'in Qadir* (there is no true god except Allah. He is One and He has no partner with Him. His is the sovereignty and His is the praise, and He is Omnipotent), will have all his sins pardoned even if they may be as large as the foam on the surface of the sea." (Muslim).

So, next time you're waiting for a bus or walking to school, remember to think about the greatness of Allah.

"And remember Allah much, that you may be successful." (62:10).

Islamic Perspectives

Dhikr Allah

(Based on a Friday *khutbah* delivered on April 1, 2005)

By: Dr. Ahmad Shafaat

Dhikr has two meanings:

- 1) Remembrance
- 2) Reminder, statement, mention.

Dhikr Allah can then have four meanings:

- 1) Remembrance of Allah (by us)
- 2) Remembrance by Allah (of us)
- 3) A reminder or message coming from Allah
- 4) A reminder or message about Allah

In the Qur`an when *dhikr* is used by itself, its primary meaning is the reminder or message from Allah, including the Qur`an and earlier revealed books. But when it is used as a phrase like “*dhikr Allah*”, its primary meaning seems to be the remembrance of Allah by human beings.

THE WHOLE UNIVERSE IS BUSY IN *DHIKR ALLAH*

One form of *dhikr allah* is *tasbiḥ* or glorification of Allah. The Qur`an says that everything in the universe is busy in the *tasbiḥ* of Allah:

تُسَبِّحُ لَهُ السَّمَوَاتُ السَّبْعُ وَالْأَرْضُ وَمَنْ فِيهِنَّ وَإِنْ مِنْ شَيْءٍ إِلَّا يُسَبِّحُ
بِحَمْدِهِ وَلَكِنْ لَا تَفْقَهُونَ تَسْبِيحَهُمْ إِنَّهُ كَانَ حَلِيمًا غَفُورًا



The seven heavens and the earth and all that is in them glorify him and there is not a thing but declares his praise. But you do not understand their glorification. He is truly ever forbearing, oft forgiving. (17:44)

This means that the whole universe is like a huge *masjid*, in which *dhikr* of Allah is going on at all times. This includes even the bodies of all human beings^[11]. The only place where the glorification of Allah is not going on is the consciousness of some human beings and other similar beings. But at some level even human beings are "aware" of Allah:

وَإِذْ أَخَذَ رَبُّكَ مِنْ بَنِي آدَمَ مِنْ ظُهُورِهِمْ ذُرِّيَّتَهُمْ وَأَشْهَدَهُمْ
عَلَىٰ أَنْفُسِهِمْ أَلَسْتُ بِرَبِّكُمْ قَالُوا بَلَىٰ شَهِدْنَا أَنْ تَقُولُوا يَوْمَ الْقِيَمَةِ
إِنَّا كُنَّا عَنْ هَذَا غَافِلِينَ ﴿١٧٢﴾

And consider [O man] your Lord brings forth from the children of Adam from their loins their seed and makes them testify to themselves -- "Am I not your Lord?" They say: "Yes, we bear witness (to that)" – lest they say on the day of resurrection: "Verily, we have been unaware of this." (7:171)

This declaration that Allah is the Lord, which every soul has made to him, is buried deep in our subconscious mind. The purpose of revelation is to bring it to our consciousness, so that we live by it and consciously join the rest of the Creation in the glorification of Allah and obedience to him. This is why the Qur'an often calls itself *dhikr*; e.g., in the following verse:

وَهَذَا ذِكْرٌ مُبَارَكٌ أَنْزَلْنَاهُ أَفَأَنْتُمْ لَهُ مُنْكَرُونَ ﴿٥٠﴾

And this is a blessed *dhikr* that We have sent down; are you going to deny it? (21:50)

The Qur'an is *dhikr* because: a) it is a reminder of the declaration that every human soul has made that Allah is its only true Lord; b) its main message is that we should remember the one and only true Lord; c) its main concern is to help us remember him.

AL-ISLAM IS ESSENTIALLY DHIKR ALLAH

When our consciousness starts to do *dhikr* of Allah, then we have adopted the way of *al-islam* and we have become Muslims. *Al-islam* and doing *dhikr* of Allah is therefore essentially the same thing. The Holy Qur`an says:

أَفَمَنْ شَرَحَ اللَّهُ صَدْرَهُ لِلْإِسْلَامِ فَهُوَ عَلَى نُورٍ مِّن رَّبِّهِ ۖ فَوَيْلٌ لِلْقَاسِيَةِ
 قُلُوبُهُم مِّن ذِكْرِ اللَّهِ أُولَٰئِكَ فِي ضَلَالٍ مُّبِينٍ ﴿٢٢﴾

اللَّهُ نَزَّلَ أَحْسَنَ الْحَدِيثِ كِتَابًا مُّتَشَابِهًا مَّثَانِيَ تَقْشَعِرُّ مِنْهُ جُلُودُ الَّذِينَ
 يَخْشَوْنَ رَبَّهُمْ ثُمَّ تَلِينُ جُلُودُهُمْ وَقُلُوبُهُمْ إِلَىٰ ذِكْرِ اللَّهِ ذَٰلِكَ هُدَىٰ
 اللَّهِ يَهْدِي بِهِ ۖ مَن يَشَاءُ ۚ وَمَن يُضْلِلِ اللَّهُ فَمَا لَهُ مِن هَادٍ ﴿٢٣﴾

"Is he whose breast Allah has opened for *al-islam* and who is consequently (walking with) a light from his Lord (like the one who is deprived of *al-islam*). Then woe unto those whose hearts are hardened against the *dhikr* of Allah. Such are in plain error. Allah has sent down the best of *hadith* (word, statement), a book with inner harmony and diversity. The skins of those who fear their Lord shiver from it. Then their skins and their hearts soften to the *dhikr* of Allah. Such is the guidance of Allah. He guides therewith whom He pleases, but whomever Allah leads astray has no guide." (39:22-23)

In these verses, first there is the mention of those whose breasts have been opened by Allah for *al-islam* and who are as a result given a *nur* or light to walk with. Then there is the mention of those whose hearts are too hard to remember Allah and who are therefore in *dalal*. This means that *al-islam* and *dhikr* of Allah go together. Where there is *dhikr* of Allah there is *al-islam* and where there is absence of his *dhikr* there is absence of *al-islam*. Also, the verses make it clear that the purpose of the Qur`an is to incline us to the *dhikr* of Allah.

In the following verses it is even more clearly stated that the absence of *dhikr* Allah leads man away from the way of Allah (*al-islam*) and to the way of Shaytan:

وَمَنْ يَعْشُ عَنْ ذِكْرِ الرَّحْمَنِ نُقَيِّضْ لَهُ شَيْطَانًا فَهُوَ
لَهُ قَرِينٌ ﴿٣٦﴾

وَإِنَّهُمْ لَيَصُدُّونَهُمْ عَنِ السَّبِيلِ وَيَحْسَبُونَ أَنَّهُمْ مُّهْتَدُونَ ﴿٣٧﴾

And whoever turns himself away from the *dhikr* of the Most Gracious One, We appoint for him a devil (*shaytan*) to be his associate. And (these devils) turn them away from the way (of Allah) while they think that they are guided aright. (43:36-37)

DHIKR ALLAH KEEPS US AWAY FROM EVIL AND MEANS MUCH MORE

If turning away from the *dhikr* of the Most Gracious One leads one into the hands of the devils, doing his *dhikr* keeps him safe from them. For one of the most important form of *dhikr* – *salah* – the Holy Qur`an says:

أَتْلُ مَا أُوحِيَ إِلَيْكَ مِنَ الْكِتَابِ وَأَقِمِ الصَّلَاةَ إِنَّ الصَّلَاةَ تَنْهَى
عَنِ الْفَحْشَاءِ وَالْمُنْكَرِ ۚ وَلَذِكْرُ اللَّهِ أَكْبَرُ ۗ وَاللَّهُ يَعْلَمُ مَا تَصْنَعُونَ ﴿٤٥﴾

"Read what is revealed to you in the Book and establish regular prayer. Verily, the prayer stops one from indecent and disapproved acts. But verily, *dhikr* of Allah is greater and Allah knows what you do." (29:45)

One may say that there are people who are not religious and do not do any *dhikr* and yet they lead reasonably good lives, avoiding serious sins. But if we examine the hearts and minds of such people, we will find that at some level they are aware of Allah. They believe that they are accountable for their actions, not just to the society in which they live but to some higher reality.

The words "*dhikr* of Allah is greater" cannot mean that *dhikr* in some form other than *salah*, e.g. doing *tasbeeh*, is greater than *salah*, since *salah* is the highest form of *dhikr*, combining all other forms acceptable to Allah. An acceptable

interpretation of the words is that *dhikr* of Allah includes more than prayers: it includes all that one does in accordance with Allah's will, revealed in his book and through the authentic Sunnah of his Prophet. But probably the best interpretation is that *dhikr* of Allah has many other greater blessings than helping one to avoid indecent and disapproved acts. Let me mention some of these additional blessings of *dhikr*.

DHIKR ALLAH BRINGS US IN TOUCH WITH OURSELVES

Remembrance of Allah, of course, brings us close to our Creator. But it also brings us close to our own selves:

وَلَا تَكُونُوا كَالَّذِينَ نَسُوا اللَّهَ فَأَنسَاهُمْ أَنفُسَهُمْ أُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الْفَاسِقُونَ ﴿١٩﴾

"And be not like those who forgot Allah and he made them forget their own souls. Such are the transgressors." [59:19]

It is implied in this verse that those who remember Allah also have awareness of their own selves. In this positive form the idea is similar to what is expressed in a saying attributed to the Holy Prophet: "He who has come to know his own self has come to know his Lord (*man 'arafa nafsahu fa qad 'arafah rabbahu*)"^{iii[2]}.

DHIKR ALLAH GIVES US PEACE

A priceless blessing of the remembrance of Allah is that it brings inner peace. In fact, it is the only source of peace:

وَيَقُولُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا لَوْلَا نُزِّلَ عَلَيْهِ آيَةٌ مِّن رَّبِّهِ قُلْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُضِلُّ مَن يَشَاءُ وَيَهْدِي إِلَىٰ صِرَاطٍ مُسْتَقِيمٍ ﴿٢٧﴾

الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا وَتَطْمَئِنُّ قُلُوبُهُم بِذِكْرِ اللَّهِ أَلَا بِذِكْرِ اللَّهِ تَطْمَئِنُّ الْقُلُوبُ ﴿٢٨﴾

The Unbelievers say: "Why is not a sign sent down to him from his Lord?" Say: "Truly Allah leaves to stray whom he will. He guides to himself those who turn to him in sincerity. Those who believe, and whose hearts find peace in the remembrance of Allah and beware it is in the remembrance of Allah that the hearts find real peace. (13:27-28)

DHIKR IS MUTUAL

The Qur`an tells us that Allah also remembers those who remember him:

فَاذْكُرُونِي أَذْكُرْكُمْ وَاشْكُرُوا لِي وَلَا تَكْفُرُونِ ﴿١٥٢﴾

“So remember me and I remember you. Give thanks to me and do not be ungrateful.” (2:152)

The part about *dhikr* in this verse can be understood in two ways:

1) You remember me (just as) I remember you (all the time). This meaning is consistent with the verses which tell us that Allah does not forget anything (19:64, 20:52), that is, remembers everything at all times.

2) You remember me; then I will remember you, that is, Allah’s remembering man is a result or reward of man’s remembering him. This meaning is also valid within the Qur`anic thought, since it is stated in 9:67 that Allah forgets those who forget him (see also 7:51, 20:126, 32:14, 45:34): if Allah’s forgetting man can be a result of man’s forgetting him, then Allah’s remembering man can also be a result of man’s remembering him. In this case, Allah’s remembering man is his turning to him in mercy and forgiveness and Allah’s forgetting him is to withhold from him that mercy and forgiveness.

HOW MUCH *DHIKR ALLAH* TO DO

The Qur`an says that men of understanding are those "who remember Allah standing, sitting, and lying down on their sides (*yadhkurun allah qiyaman wa qu'udan wa 'ala junubihim*)" (3:191). Since we are either standing or sitting or lying, this means all the time. But how can we remember Allah all the time? Do we not work or have some fun or play with children? Do we become like monks, doing *tasbeih* all the time? The answer is, No. It is possible to remember Allah all the time and yet live fully. For remembering something means being aware of it and awareness has many levels. You can be aware of something while doing something else. Thus when you are sitting in a *masjid*, you are not all the time thinking about *masjid* but still at some level you are aware that you are in the *masjid*. If you are working at home and other members of your family are also present, you are aware of their presence and sometimes even while working you are aware of what they are doing. We can be even sleeping and yet our mind may be registering what is going on around us. In the same way, we can be aware of Allah while doing other things.

If we spend part of our time in doing *dhikr Allah* with our conscious mind, then for other times we can be aware of him even if we are busy with something else. Thus if when I sleep I say, as recommended in ahadith: *bi ismik allahumma ahya wa amut* (in your name, O Allah, I live and die) and in this way entrust myself to Allah, then the whole night my mind may be aware of him at some level. Then when I wake up I pray *fajr* and take a few minutes to look ahead at all my day's activities -- going to work or school or taking care of some of my needs and some of my family's needs, including need for some fun. If for each activity I consciously make the intention or *niyyah* that it is in accordance with the will of Allah, then while I am engaged in those activities I will be aware of Allah at some level. This intention is very important. With this intention even secular activities become religious and a means of Allah's remembrance and spiritual blessings. Without such an intention, even religious activities such as looking after a *masjid* or teaching or learning Islam become secular, with little spiritual benefit.

WAYS OF *DHIKR ALLAH* AT THE CONSCIOUS LEVEL

Thus if we consciously do *dhikr allah* for part of our time, then for the rest of the time we would be aware of him at some subconscious level. We therefore need to know what are the ways of remembering Allah at the conscious level.

Whenever we make a conscious decision or intention to do something or not to do something because Allah and his Messenger (*sall allah 'alayh wa sallam*) have commanded/recommended it or prohibited/discouraged it we are doing conscious *dhikr*.

Another form of *dhikr Allah* at the conscious level is *salah*:

إِنِّى أَنَا اللَّهُ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا أَنَا فَاعْبُدْنِى وَأَقِمِ الصَّلَاةَ لِذِكْرِى ﴿١٤﴾

"Lo! I am Allah. There is no god except me. So [O man] serve me and establish salah for my remembrance." (20:14)

But believers are expected to spend some more time in conscious remembrance of Allah than performing the five obligatory prayers. The Holy Qur`an says:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا أَذْكُرُوا اللَّهَ ذِكْرًا كَثِيرًا ﴿٤١﴾

وَسَبِّحُوهُ بُكْرَةً وَأَصِيلًا ﴿٤٢﴾

"O you who believe! Remember Allah with much remembrance; and glorify him morning and evening." (33:41-42)

وَأَذْكُرْ رَبَّكَ فِى نَفْسِكَ تَضَرُّعًا وَخِيفَةً وَدُونَ الْجَهْرِ مِنَ الْقَوْلِ بِالْغُدُوِّ

وَالْأَصَالِ وَلَا تَكُن مِّنَ الْغَافِلِينَ ﴿٢٠٥﴾

"And remember [O man] your Lord in your heart with humility and fear and with words in low voice in the mornings and early evenings late afternoons and do not be of those who are unaware." (7:205)

فَإِذَا قُضِيَتِ الصَّلَاةُ فَانْتَشِرُوا فِى الْأَرْضِ وَابْتَغُوا مِن فَضْلِ اللَّهِ وَاذْكُرُوا

اللَّهَ كَثِيرًا لَّعَلَّكُمْ تُفْلِحُونَ ﴿١٠﴾

"And remember Allah much, that you may be successful." (62:10)

Ahadith suggest many ways of doing *dhikr* at the conscious level. They mostly consist of performing *ṣalah* on *nafl* or non-obligatory basis or repeating some parts of the *ṣalah*.

Ṣalah has the following parts:

Tasbiḥ -- declaring that Allah is above all imperfections, e.g. in the form *subḥan allah*

Tahmid -- expressing Allah's praises, e.g. in the form *al-ḥamd lillah*

Takbir -- expressing Allah's greatness, e.g. in the form *allahu akbar*

Tashahud -- declaring oneness of Allah and the *risalah* of Muhammad (*ṣall allah 'alayh wa sallam*)

Istighfar -- seeking forgiveness from Allah,

Ṣalah 'ala al-nabi -- honoring the Prophet (*ṣall allah 'alayh wa sallam*) and praying for increased blessings of God on him

Tilawah al-Qur`an -- reading the Qur`an

So you can choose certain times in the morning and/or evening etc and regularly read the Qur`an and/or perform *nafl* prayers and/or repeat a certain number of times words like:

subḥan allah

al-ḥamd lillah

allahu akbar

la ilaha illallah

la ilaha illallah waḥdahu la sharika lah, lahul-mulk wa lahul-ḥamd wa huwa `ala kulli sha`yin qadir

subḥan allahi wa biḥamdihi subḥan allahil 'azim

some form of istighfar

some form of blessings on the Prophet (ṣall allah 'alayh wa sallam)

KEEPING COMPANY OF OTHER AHL AL-DHIKR

The Holy Qur`an tells us that whenever possible we should stay in the company of those who do *dhikr*. This will make it easier for us to do *dhikr* and also increase the blessing of *dhikr*:

وَأَصْبِرْ نَفْسَكَ مَعَ الَّذِينَ يَدْعُونَ رَبَّهُمْ بِالْغَدَاةِ وَالْعَشِيِّ
يُرِيدُونَ وَجْهَهُ^ط وَلَا تَعْدُ عَيْنَاكَ عَنْهُمْ تُرِيدُ زِينَةَ الْحَيَاةِ
الدُّنْيَا^ط وَلَا تُطِيعْ مَنْ أَغْفَلْنَا قَلْبَهُ عَن ذِكْرِنَا وَاتَّبَعَ هَوَاهُ وَكَانَ أَمْرُهُ
فُرْطًا ﴿٢٨﴾

And persist in the company of those who call upon their Lord morning and evening seeking his Countenance and do not turn your eyes away from them desiring the attractions of the life of this world. And do not obey him whose heart We have made to neglect Our *dhikr*, who follows his own whims and desires and whose affairs (deeds) have gone beyond bounds." (18:28)

^{ii[1]} That the body and the person who possess it have different relationships with Allah is suggested by the following verse:

A day (is coming when) their tongues, their hands, and their feet will bear witness against them as to what they used to do. (24:24)

^{iii[2]} This hadith is rejected by most Hadith scholars as falsely attributed to the Holy Prophet. At first sight it seems to be expressing the same idea as the Qur`anic verse, presenting the other side of the same coin: The hadith talks about knowing while the Qur`an talks about forgetting. The Qur`an says that those who forget Allah forget their own selves while the hadith says that those who know Allah know themselves. But there is a subtle and important difference. In the Qur`an

the emphasis is on remembering Allah, which leads to self-awareness while in the hadith the emphasis is on knowing oneself, which leads to knowing Allah

Dhikr - Remembering Allah

by Khalid Baig

"I am with my servant as long as he remembers Me." (Hadith Qudsi)

The shepherd was approached by a lone traveler in the desert. "I am hungry and have ran out of food. Could I milk one of your sheep?" The shepherd replied that he was not the owner of the sheep and could not let anyone milk them without the owner's permission. The owner would surely notice it and would not like it. The traveler had an idea. "Why don't you sell one of them to me. When the owner asks, you can tell him that a wolf killed it. Wolves attack the herds all the time. I'll satisfy my hunger. You'll get the money. We'll both profit." The shepherd strongly refused saying: "But what about Allah!" Strangely, the traveler was pleased to hear that. "As long as there are people like you in this ummah, wolves won't kill the lambs," he said.

The shepherd was, of course, not aware that he was talking to the Ameer-ul-Momineen, Umar, Radi-Allahu unhu, who kept his finger on the pulse of his ummah. It was the spontaneous, natural reaction of a believer who remembered Allah. And the comment came from the person who knew the value of that remembrance. Today we find wolves killing the lambs everywhere. Corruption has become common place in most parts of the Muslim world. Why? Because most of us have moved away from that remembrance that was the protection against sin and corruption!

The journey of life is beautifully described in the Qur'an as a constant toil, at the end of which we are going to meet our Creator.

"O mankind, Verily you are ever toiling on towards your Lord --painfully toiling-- and you shall meet Him." [Inshiqaq 84:6].

The person who remembers Allah, then, is the person who keeps his eyes on his destination. The journey is arduous. The distractions are many. Satan and our own desires are constantly trying to steer us away from our goal. But the stakes are extremely high. And a vigilant and wise person will never lose sight of his destination. Such is the person who remembers Allah all the time.

"Behold! In the creation of the heavens and the earth, and the alternation of night and day, there are indeed Signs for men of understanding-- men who remember Allah standing, sitting, and lying down on their sides." [Aal-e-Imran, 3:190-191].

This remembrance or dhikr is itself the source of strength for the believer. According to one hadith qudsi, Allah says: "I am with my servant as long as he remembers Me."

It is for this reason that a distinction is made between other ritual acts of worship, and dhikr. We are not required to engage in the former excessively. In fact we are cautioned against that possibility. But we are asked to perform dhikr profusely --keeping our heart and tongue busy in that remembrance -- all the time. We simply cannot overdo it. In fact Prophet Muhammad, Sall-Allahu alayhi wa sallam, said: "Those who enter paradise will not

be sorry for anything they did in this life, except the moments they spent without the remembrance of Allah."

But how can we remember Allah when we cannot see Him and cannot even visualize His Person? There are two answers. First, we look at His creations, for the creation reminds one of the Creator. The verses of Aal-e-Imran quoted above mention this, as do numerous other verses throughout the Qur'an. The more we look at the grand design of the universe, the more we are reminded of the Designer. How many forces must come together with perfect coordination before a seed can sprout? What keeps this immensely complex and constantly expanding universe work so flawlessly? From the simplest to the most complex things there are pointers to the Creator on every square inch of this universe. In fact the Arabic word for the universe (alam) comes from the root ilm or knowledge, because this universe is the means of knowing the Creator.

Unfortunately the tragedy that occurred when the Western civilization took the lead in science, was that this connection was severed. As the Qur'an mentions:

"And how many Signs in the heavens and the earth do they pass by? Yet they turn their faces away from them." [Yusuf, 12:105].

For the Muslim scientists today, a prime task must be to remove this ignorant de-linking. It is a sign of wisdom that a person looks at the universe and says Subhan-Allah, Glory be to Allah.

Second, we recall Allah's blessings on us. The fact is that we cannot fully encompass the blessings of a single moment in our life. Right now somebody is reading these lines. We take the act for granted and think nothing of it. But let us pause and reflect on it. The eyes have to be working for us to recognize the printed characters. The brain has to be working for us to translate the images of characters we see on paper into meaningful statements that they stand for. We need peace of mind to reflect on it. We need available time to even begin the process. None of these is of our own making.

Most of us are lucky enough to get food everyday. Again, we just take it for granted. But let us reflect on the process of production of food materials; cooking and preparation of our meals; and its consumption and digestion by our body -- and we may begin to realize the blessings that we are receiving in one bite of the simplest food we may eat! It is a sign of wisdom that a person realizes all this and says Alhamdulillah, Praise be to Allah.

Subhan-Allah, Alhamdulillah, Allahu-Akbar, these are some of the forms of dhikr of Allah. To pronounce them is dhikr by the tongue. To understand and reflect on them is dhikr by heart. Both forms are highly desirable and they reinforce each other. Repetition by the tongue engraves the words in the heart. Understanding and reflection brings life to the spoken words. Together, they help us keep our eyes on our destination through the journey of life. They help us develop and strengthen our relationship with Allah, thereby bringing peace of mind and protecting us from the evil temptations. And we can hope that a person who always remembered that he has to meet with Allah will not be disappointed when that time comes.

The unlettered shepherd was a greater man of understanding than the "greatest great" who does not remember Allah. If only we can understand.

Gatherings of Dhikr

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Infinite glory and thanks be to Allah (Subhanahu wata'ala) who bestowed upon us all kinds of favours and honoured us by making us Muslims and valued us by making us the Ummah of Muhammad (Peace and blessings be upon him) which is the highest blessing.

Dhikr is the Greatest Obligation and a Perpetual Divine Order

Dhikr of Allah is the most excellent act of Allah's servants and is stressed over a hundred times in the Holy Qur'an. It is the most praiseworthy work to earn Allah's pleasure, the most effective weapon to overcome the enemy, and the most deserving of deeds in reward. It is the flag of Islam, the polish of hearts, the essence of the science of faith, the immunisation against hypocrisy, the head of worship, and the key of all success. There are no restrictions on the modality, frequency, or timing of dhikr whatsoever. The restrictions on modality pertain to certain specific obligatory acts which are not the issue here, such as Salat. The Shari`a is clear and everyone knows what they have to do. Indeed, the Prophet said that the People of Paradise will only regret one thing: not having made enough dhikr in the world! Are not those who are making up reasons to discourage others from making dhikr afraid of Allah in this tremendous matter?

Allah says in His holy Book: "O Believers, make abundant mention of ALLAH!" (33:41) And He mentions of His servants "Those who remember their Lord standing, and sitting, and lying on their sides" (3:191), in other words at all times of the day and night. He said (3:190-191): "The creation of heaven and earth and the changes of night and day are signs for people who have wisdom: -- consider who is described as having wisdom -- Those who remember (and recite and call) Allah standing up, sitting, and lying on their sides." `A'isha said, as narrated by Muslim, that the Prophet mentioned/remembered Allah at all times of the day and night.

The Prophet said: "If your hearts were always in the state that they are in during dhikr, the angels would come to see you to the point that they would greet you in the middle of the road." Muslim narrated it. Imam Nawawi in his Sharh sahih muslim commented on this hadith saying: "This kind of sight is shown to someone who persists in meditation (muraqaba), reflection (fikr), and anticipation (iqbal) of the next world."

Mu`adh ibn Jabal said that the Prophet also said: "The People of Paradise will not regret except one thing alone: the hour that passed them by and in which they made no remembrance of Allah." Narrated by Bayhaqi in Shu`ab al-iman (1:392 #512-513) and by Tabarani. Haythami in

Majma' al-zawa'id (10:74) said that its narrators are all trustworthy (thiqat), while Suyuti declared it hasan in his Jami' al-saghir (#7701).

Allah placed His remembrance above prayer in value by making prayer the means and remembrance the goal. He said:

"Lo! Worship guards one from lewdness and iniquity, but verily, remembrance of Allah is greater/more important." (29:45)

"He is successful who purifies himself, and remembers the name of his Lord, and so prays." (87:14-15)

"So establish prayer for My remembrance." (20:14)

Ibn Hajar in his Fath al-bari (1989 ed. 11:251) relates Qadi Abu Bakr Ibn al-'Arabi's explanation that there is no good deed except with dhikr as a precondition for its validity, and whoever does not remember Allah in his heart at the time of his sadaqa or fasting, for example, then his deed is incomplete: therefore dhikr is the best of deeds because of this. Dhikr is, therefore, something of tremendous importance. Abu Hurayra said that the Prophet said, Peace be upon him: "The earth and everything in it is cursed, except for dhikr and what attends dhikr, and a teacher (of dhikr) and a student (of dhikr)." Narrated by Tirmidhi who said it is hasan, Ibn Majah who said the same, Bayhaqi, and others. Suyuti cites it in al-Jami' al-saghir from al-Bazzar's similar narration from Ibn Mas'ud and he declared it sahih. Tabarani also narrated it in al-Awsat from Abu al-Darda'. By the words "the world and everything in it" is meant here all that claims status or existence apart from Allah instead of in Him. In fact, all creation does dhikr because Allah said that all creation does praise to Him constantly, and tasbih is a kind of dhikr. Allah said of the Prophet Yunus, when the whale swallowed him: "Had he not been one of My glorifiers (musabbihin), he would have remained inside the whale's stomach until Judgement Day." (37:143-144) The one who engages in dhikr has the highest rank of all before Allah. The people who call on Allah without distraction have been mentioned in Qur'an, as well as the effect that calling has on their heart: "In houses which Allah has allowed to be raised to honour and for His Name to be remembered in them; He is glorified there day and night by men whom neither trade nor sale can divert from the remembrance of Allah" (24:36-37). "Those who believe, and their hearts find satisfaction in the remembrance of Allah: By remembering Allah, truly satisfaction comes to the heart" (13:28).

During the night of Isra' and Mi'raj, the Prophet was taken up to a point where he heard the screeching of the Pens (writing the divine Decree). He saw a man who had disappeared into the light of the Throne. He said: "Who is this? Is this an angel?" It was said to him, no. He said: "Is it a Prophet?" Again the answer was no. He said: "Who is it then?" The answer was: "This is a man whose tongue was moist with Allah's remembrance in the world, and his heart was attached to the mosques, and he never incurred the curse of his father and mother." Shaykh Muhammad 'Alawi al-Malaki cited it in his collated text of the sound narration's on that topic entitled al-Anwar al-bahiyya min isra' wa mi'raj khayr al-bariyya.

In Ahmad, Tirmidhi and Ibn Majah, and Ibn Hibban declared it fair (hasan): A man came to the Prophet and said, "O Rasulallah, the laws and conditions of Islam have become too many for me. Tell me something that I can always keep (i.e. in particular, as opposed to the many rules and conditions that must be kept in general)." By reading that the man said there were too many conditions to keep, one must understand that he was unsure that he could keep them all. He wanted something that he would be sure to keep always. The Prophet said: "(I am advising you in one thing:) Keep your tongue always moist with dhikrullah."

It is well-known in Islam that the best work in the path of Allah is jihad. Yet the Prophet, Peace be upon him, placed dhikr even above jihad in the following authentic hadiths.

Abu al-Darda' narrates: The Prophet once asked his companions: "Shall I tell you about the best of all deeds, the best act of piety in the eyes of your Lord, which will elevate your status in the Hereafter, and carries more virtue than the spending of gold and silver in the service of Allah or taking part in jihad and slaying or being slain in the path of Allah? The dhikr of Allah." Related in the Malik's Muwatta', the Musnad of Ahmad, the Sunan of Tirmidhi, Ibn Majah, and the Mustadrak of Hakim. Al-Bayhaqi, Hakim and others declared it sahih.

Abu Sa'id narrates: The Prophet was asked, "Which of the servants of Allah is best in rank before Allah on the Day of resurrection?" He said: "The ones who remember him much." I said: "O Messenger of Allah, what about the fighter in the way of Allah?" He answered: "Even if he strikes the unbelievers and mushrikin with his sword until it broke, and becomes red with their blood, truly those who do dhikr are better than him in rank." Related in Ahmad, Tirmidhi, and Bayhaqi.

`Abd Allah ibn `Umar said that the Prophet used to say: "Everything has a polish, and the polish of hearts is dhikr of Allah. Nothing is more calculated to rescue from Allah's punishment than dhikr of Allah." He was asked whether this did not apply also to jihad in Allah's path, and he replied: "Not even if one should ply his sword until it breaks." Bayhaqi narrated it in Kitab al-da'awat al-kabir as well as in his Shu'ab al-iman (1:396 #522), also al-Mundhiri in al-Targhib (2:396) and Tibrizi mentions it in Mishkat al-masabih, at the end of the book of Supplications.

Loudness in dhikr

The word dhikr has many meanings. It means:

- Allah's Book and its recitation;
- Prayer;
- Learning and teaching: The author of Fiqh al-sunna said:

Sa'id ibn Jubayr said, "Anyone engaged in obeying Allah is in fact engaged in the remembrance of Allah." Some of the earlier scholars tied it to some more specified form. `Ata said, "The gatherings of dhikr are the gatherings where the lawful and the prohibited things are discussed, for instance, selling, buying, prayers, fasting, marriage, divorce, and pilgrimage."

Qurtubi said, "Gatherings of dhikr are the gatherings for knowledge and admonition, those in which the Word of Allah and the sunnah of His Messenger, accounts of our righteous predecessors, and sayings of the righteous scholars are learned and practised without any addition or innovation, and without any ulterior motives or greed."

- Invocation of Allah with the tongue according to one of the formulas taught by the Prophet or any other formula;
- Remembrance of Allah in the heart, or in both the heart and the tongue.

We are concerned here with the last two meanings, that of mention of Allah, as in the verse, "The believers are those who, when they hear Allah mentioned, their hearts tremble" (al-Anfal), and the Prophet's saying in Tirmidhi and Ibn Majah from Ibn Jubayr: "The best dhikr is La ilaha illallah." The Prophet did not say, "the best dhikr is making a lecture"; or "giving advice"; or "raising funds." We are also concerned here with the meaning of remembrance through the heart, as in the verse: "The men and women who remember Allah abundantly" (33:35). The Prophet both praised and explained what is in the latter verse when he said, as it is related in Muslim, "The single-hearted are foremost." When he was asked, "O Messenger of Allah, who are the single-hearted?" he replied, "The men and women who remember Allah abundantly." The Prophet further elucidated the role of the heart in effecting such remembrance when he said to Abu Hurayra: "Go with these two sandals of mine and whoever you meet behind this wall that witnesses that there is no god except Allah with certitude in his heart, give him glad tidings that he will enter Paradise." (Narrated by Muslim.)

Dhikr may sometimes mean both inner remembrance and outward mention, as in the verse "Remember Me, and I shall remember you" (2:152) when it is read in the light of the hadith qudsi, "Those that remember Me in their heart, I remember them in My heart; and those that remember Me in a gathering (i.e. that make mention of Me), I remember them (i.e. make mention of them) in a gathering better than theirs." We return to the explanation of that important hadith further below. Suffice it to say that, broadly speaking, there are three types of dhikr: of the heart, of the tongue, and of the two together.

Ibn Hajar in Fath al-Bari (1989 ed. 11:251) explained that what is meant by dhikr in Abu al-Darda's narration of the primacy of dhikr over jihad is the complete dhikr and consciousness of Allah's greatness whereby one becomes better, for example, than those who battle the disbeliever's without such recollection.

In another hadith narrated by Bukhari, the Prophet compared doers of dhikr among non-doers, to those who are alive among those who are dead: mathalu al-ladhi yadhkuru rabbahu wa al-ladhi la yadhkuru rabbahu mathalu al-hayyi wa al-mayyit. (Book of da'awat ch. 66 "The merit of dhikrullah") Ibn Hajar comments it thus in his Fath al-Bari (1989 ed. 11:250):

What is meant by dhikr here is the utterance of the expressions which we have been encouraged to say, and say abundantly, such as the enduring good deeds -- al-baqiyat al-salihah -- and they are: subhan allah, al-hamdu lillah, la ilaha illallah, allahu akbar and all that is related to them such as the hawqala (la hawla wa la quwwata illa billah), the basmala (bismillah al-rahman al-

rahim), the hasbala (hasbunallahu wa ni`ma al-wakil), istighfar, and the like, as well as invocations for the good of this world and the next.

Dhikrullah also applies to diligence in obligatory or praiseworthy acts, such as the recitation of Qur'an, the reading of hadith, the study of the Science of Islam (al-`ilm), and supererogatory prayers.

Dhikr can take place with the tongue, for which the one who utters it receives reward, and it is not necessary for this that he understand or recall its meaning, on condition that he not mean other than its meaning by its utterance; and if, in addition to its utterance, there is dhikr in the heart, then it is more complete; and if there is, added to that, the recollection of the meaning of the dhikr and what it entails such as magnifying Allah and exalting Him above defect or need, it is even more complete; and if all this takes place inside a good deed, whether an obligatory prayer, or jihad, or other than that, it is even more complete; and if one perfects one's turning to Allah and purifies one's sincerity towards Him: then that is the farthest perfection.

Fakhr al-Din al-Razi said: "What is meant by the dhikr of the tongue is the expressions that stand for tasbih, tahmid, and tamjid -- exaltation, praise, and glorification. As for the dhikr of the heart, it consists in reflection on the proof-texts that point to Allah's essence and His attributes, on those of the obligations including what is enjoined and what is forbidden so that one may examine the rulings that pertain to them, and on the secrets of Allah's creation. As for dhikr of the limbs, it consists in their being immersed in obedience, and that is why Allah named prayer: "dhikr" when He said: "When the call is proclaimed on Jum`a, hasten earnestly to the dhikr of Allah" (62:9). It is reported from some of the Knowers of Allah that dhikr has seven aspects:

dhikr of the eyes, which consists in weeping (buka');

dhikr of the ears, which consists in listening (isgha');

dhikr of the tongue, which consists in praise (thana');

dhikr of the hands, which consists in giving (`ata');

dhikr of the body, which consists in loyalty (wafa');

dhikr of the heart, which consists in fear and hope (kawf wa raja');

dhikr of the spirit, which consists of utter submission and acceptance (taslim wa rida')."

Loudness in Dhikr

The Prophet praised a man who was awwah -- literally: one who says ah, ah! -- that is: loud in his dhikr, even when others censured him. Ahmad narrated with a good chain in his Musnad (4:159) from `Uqba ibn `Amir: "The Prophet said of a man named Dhu al-bijadayn: innahu awwah, He is a man who says ah a lot. This is because he was a man abundant in his dhikr of Allah in Qur'an-recitation, and he would raise his voice high when supplicating."

Allah said of the Prophet Ibrahim: "Verily, Ibrahim is awwah and halim" (9:114, 11:75), that is, according to Tafsir al-jalalayn: "Crying out and suffering much, out of fear and dread of his Lord." [halim = merciful, gentle.] The Prophet prayed to be awwah in the following invocation: rabbi ij`alni ilayka awwahan, "O Allah, make me one who often cries out ah to you." Narrated by Tirmidhi (book of da`awat #102, hasan sahih), Ibn Majah (Du`a' #2), and Ahmad (1:227) with a strong chain [Yahya ibn Sa`id al-Qattan < Sufyan al-Thawri < Shu`ba < `Amr ibn Murra < `Abd Allah ibn al-Harith < Taliq ibn Qays al-Hanafi < Ibn `Abbas] with the following wording:

The Prophet used to supplicate thus: "O my Lord! help me and do not cause me to face difficulty; grant me victory and do not grant anyone victory over me; devise for me and not against me; guide me and facilitate guidance for me; make me overcome whoever rebels against me; O my Lord! make me abundantly thankful to You (shakkaran laka), abundantly mindful of You (dhakkaran laka), abundantly devoted to You (rahhaban laka), perfectly obedient to You (mitwa`an ilayks), lowly and humble before You (mukhbitan laka), always crying out and turning back to You (awwahan muniban)!....

Gatherings of Collective, Loud Dhikr

The hadith qudsi already quoted, "Those that remember Me in a gathering," makes gatherings of collective, loud dhikr the gateway to realising Allah's promise "Remember Me, and I shall remember you." It is no wonder that such gatherings receive the highest praise and blessing from Allah and His Prophet, Peace be upon him, according to many excellent and authentic hadiths.

In Bukhari and Muslim: The Prophet said that Allah has angels roaming the roads to find the people of dhikr, i.e. those who say La Ilaha Illallah and similar expressions, and when they find a group of people (qawm) reciting dhikr, they call each other and encompass them in layers until the first heaven -- the location of which is in Allah's knowledge. (This is to say, an unlimited number of angels are going to be over that group. He didn't say: "when they find one person." Therefore it is a must to be in a group to get this particular reward.) Allah asks His angels, and He knows already (but he asks in order to assure it and make it understandable for us) "What are my servants saying?" (He did not say "servant," but `ibadi, "servants" in the plural.) The angels say: "They are praising You (tasbih) and magnifying Your Name (takbir) and glorifying You (tahmid), and giving You the best Attributes (tamjid)." (Can you say that all this is a lecture or a study group? Can you say that this is silent? Rather, this is saying "Alhamdulillah" and all kinds of other dhikr.) Allah says: "Have they seen Me?" The angels answer: "O our Lord! They did not see You." He says: "(They are praising Me without seeing Me,) what if they see Me!" The angels answer: "O our Lord, if they saw You, they are going to do more and more worship, more and more tasbih, more and more takbir, more and more tamjid!" He says: "What are they asking?" Angels say: "They are asking Your Paradise!" He says: "Did they see Paradise?" They say: "O our Lord, no, they have not seen it." He says: "And how will they be if they see it?" They say: "If they see Paradise, they are going to be more attached and attracted to it!" He says: "What are they fearing and running away from?" (When we are saying, "Ya Ghaffar (O Forgiver), Ya Sattar (O Concealer)," it means that we are fearing Him because of our sins. We are asking Him to hide our sins and forgive us.) They say: "They are fearing and running away from hellfire." He says: "And have they seen hellfire?" They say: "O our Lord, no, they did not see hellfire." He says: "And how will they be if they see fire and hell?" They say: "If they see your fire, they are going

to be running from it more and more, and be even more afraid of it." (Now listen to this carefully:) And Allah says: "I am making you witness (and does Allah need witnesses? He needs no witness since He said: "Allah is sufficient as witness." Why make the angels witnesses? Does Allah change His word? "Making you witness" here means, "Assuring you") that I have forgiven them." (Why has Allah forgiven them? Because, as the beginning of the hadith states, they are a group of people reciting the Names of Allah and remembering Him with His dhikr.) One of the angels says: "O my Lord, someone was there who did not belong to that group, but came for some other need." (That person came for some other purpose than dhikr, to ask someone for something.) Allah says: "Those are such a group that anyone who sits with them -- no matter for what reason -- that person will also have his sins forgiven."

The late Imam Ahmad Mashhur al-Haddad (d. 1416/1995) said in his book *Miftah al-janna* (cf. transl. Mostafa Badawi, *Key to the Garden*, Quilliam Press p. 107-108):

This hadith indicates what merit lies in gathering for dhikr, and in everyone present doing it aloud and in unison, because of the phrases: "They are invoking You" in the plural, and "They are the people who sit," meaning those who assemble for remembrance and do it in unison, something which can only be done aloud, since someone whose dhikr is silent has no need to seek out a session in someone else's company.

This is further indicated by the hadith qudsi, which runs: "Allah says: I am to my servant as he expects of Me, I am with him when he remembers Me. If he remembers Me in his heart, I remember him to Myself, and if he remembers me in an assembly, I mention him in an assembly better than his..." (Bukhari and Muslim) Thus, silent dhikr is differentiated from dhikr said outloud by His saying: "remembers Me within himself," meaning: "silently," and "in an assembly," meaning "aloud."

Dhikr in a gathering can only be done aloud and in unison. The above hadith thus constitutes proof that dhikr done outloud in a gathering is an exalted kind of dhikr which is mentioned at the Highest Assembly (al-mala' al-a`la) by our Majestic Lord and the angels who are near to Him, "who extol Him night and day, and never tire" (21:20).

The affinity is clearly evident between those who do dhikr in the transcendent world, who have been created with an inherently obedient and remembering nature, namely the angels, and those who do dhikr in the dense world, whose natures contain lassitude and distraction; namely, human beings. The reward of the latter for their dhikr is that they be elevated to a rank similar to that of the Highest Assembly, which is sufficient honour and favour for anyone.

Allah has bestowed a special distinction upon those who remember Him. The Prophet, peace be upon him, said, "The single-hearted (al-mufarridun) have surpassed all." They asked, "Who are these single-hearted people, O Prophet of Allah?" He replied, "Those men and women who remember Allah unceasingly." (Muslim)

The mountain has overtaken the people because the mountain is reciting dhikr also. Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya in *Madarij al-salikin* explains that the term mufarridun has two meanings here: either the muwahidun, the people engaged in tawhid who declare Allah's Oneness as a group (i.e.

not necessarily alone), or those whom he calls ahad furada, the same people as (single) individuals sitting alone (in isolation). From this example it is evident that in the explanation of Ibn al-Qayyim al-Jawziyya, sittings of dhikr can be in a group, and can be all alone. In another explanation of mufarridun also cited by Ibn Qayyim, the meaning is 'those that tremble from reciting dhikrullah, entranced with it perpetually, not caring what people say or do about them.' This is because the Prophet said: udhkur Allaha hatta yaqulu majnun "Remember / mention Allah as much as you want, until people say that you are crazy and foolish" (Narrated by Ahmad in his Musnad, Ibn Hibban in his Sahih, and al-Hakim who declared it sahih); that is: do not care about them!

The mufarridun are the people who are really alive. Abu Musa reported, "The likeness of the one who remembers his Lord and the one who does not remember Him is like that of a living to a dead person." (Bukhari)

Ibn `Umar reported that the Prophet said: "When you pass by the gardens of Paradise, avail yourselves of them." The Companions asked: "What are the gardens of Paradise, O Messenger of Allah?" He replied: "The circles of dhikr. There are roaming angels of Allah who go about looking for the circles of dhikr, and when they find them they surround them closely." Tirmidhi narrated it (hasan gharib) and Ahmad.

Abu Sa`id Al-Khudri and Abu Huraira reported that the Prophet, peace be upon him, said, "When any group of men remember Allah, angels surround them and mercy covers them, tranquility descends upon them, and Allah mentions them to those who are with Him." Narrated by Muslim, Tirmidhi, Ahmad, Ibn Majah, and Bayhaqi.

Muslim, Ahmad, and Tirmidhi narrate from Mu`awiya that the Prophet went out to a circle of his Companions and asked: "What made you sit here?" They said: "We are sitting here in order to remember / mention Allah (nadhkurullah) and to glorify Him (wa nahmaduhu) because He guided us to the path of Islam and he conferred favours upon us." Thereupon he adjured them by Allah and asked if that was the only purpose of their sitting there. They said: "By Allah, we are sitting here for this purpose only." At this the Prophet said: "I am not asking you to take an oath because of any misapprehension against you, but only because Gabriel came to me and informed me that Allah, the Exalted and Glorious, was telling the angels that He is proud of you!" Note that the hadith stated *jalasna* -- we sat -- in the plural, not singular. It referred to an association of people in a group, not one person.

Shahr ibn Hawshab relates that one day Abu al-Darda' entered the Masjid of Bayt al-Maqdis (Jerusalem) and saw people gathered around their admonisher (mudhakkir) who was reminding them, and they were raising their voices, weeping, and making invocations. Abu al-Darda' said: "My father's life and my mother's be sacrificed for those who moan over their state before the Day of Moaning!" Then he said: "O Ibn Hawshab, let us hurry and sit with those people. I heard the Prophet say: If you see the groves of Paradise, graze in them, and we said: O Messenger of Allah, what are the groves of Paradise? He said: The circles of remembrance, by the One in Whose hand is my soul, no people gather for the remembrance of Allah Almighty except the angels surround them closely, and mercy covers them, and Allah mentions them in His presence, and when they desire to get up and leave, a herald calls them saying: Rise forgiven, your evil

deeds have been changed into good deeds!" Then Abu al-Darda' made towards them and sat with them eagerly. The hafiz Ibn al-Jawzi relates it with his chain of transmission in the chapter entitled: "Mention of those of the elite who used to attend the gatherings of story-tellers" of his book *al-Qussas wa al-mudhakkirin* (The Story-tellers and the Admonishers) ed. Muhammad Basyuni Zaghlul (Beirut: dar al-kutub al-`ilmiyya, 1406/1986) p. 31.

The above shows evidence for the permissibility of loud dhikr, group dhikr, and the understanding of dhikr as including admonishment and the recounting of stories that benefit the soul. And Allah knows best.

The importance of silent dhikr

The author of *Fiqh al-sunna* writes:

The purpose of dhikr is to purify hearts and souls and awaken the human conscience. The Qur'an says:

"And establish regular prayer, for prayer restrains from shameful and unjust deeds, and remembrance of Allah is the greatest thing in life, without doubt." (29:45)

In other words, the remembrance of Allah has a greater impact in restraining one from shameful and unjust deeds than just the formal regular prayer. This is so because when a servant opens up his soul to his Lord, extolling His praise, Allah strengthens him with His light, increasing thereby his faith and conviction, and reassuring his mind and heart. This refers to:

"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." (13:28)

And when hearts are satisfied with the Truth, they turn to the highest ideals without being deflected by impulses of desire or lust. This underscores the importance of dhikr in man's life. Obviously it would be unreasonable to expect these results just by uttering certain words, for words of the tongue unsupported by a willing heart are of no consequence.

If you have any queries or comments then please send them to:

What is the precise meaning of 'dhikr'? What is its scope and what does it entail?

Does it simply involve certain utterances of the tongue, like *Subhan Allah* (Glory be to Allah), *Alhamdu lillah* (All praise be to Allah), *Allahu Akbar* (Allah is the Greatest), *La ilaha illallah* (There is no god but Allah)?

Does it involve the recitation of some other selected verses Quran? Or is there more to it?

Of course, such utterances of the tongue and recitation of verses of the Quran are important. In fact they are very important forms of dhikr, for indeed, the best forms of remembrance are those that involve both the heart and the tongue.

You must understand, however, that the scope of dhikr is considerably wider. Dhikr must not only be felt by the heart and uttered with the tongue, but must also effect good deeds.

Significantly, Ibn Al-Qayyim suggests that dhikr encompasses "any and every particular moment when you are thinking, saying or doing things which Allah likes".

Hence, if your conversation is filled with the words of God, this is dhikr. And if all your actions are in accordance with His will, this is dhikr. Indeed Allah commends that we remember Him while standing, sitting and even while reclining. This is only possible if dhikr embraces every single aspect of life.

Consider for example the following verse of the Quran where dhikr is emphasized in both Prayer and business activity:

[O Believers, when the call to Prayer is sounded on the Day of Congregation, hasten to Allah's remembrance and leave all worldly commerce. This is for your own good, if you but knew it. And when the Prayer is finished, then disperse through the land,

and seek of the bounty of Allah; and remember Allah frequently

that you may prosper.](Al-Jumu`ah 62:9-10)

Attending the Friday Prayers, listening to the Khutbah, or sermon, and performing the congregational Prayer are all well known as forms of dhikr. But in our worldly pursuits as well, we are urged to remember Allah even more often.

We may thus conclude, that attending to your personal needs, earning a livelihood and spending on your family are all forms of dhikr. But of course, they can only be dhikr if, alongside with the relevant supplications in the heart and on the

tongue, they are done in obedience to Allah, for His pleasure, to attain Paradise.

Otherwise, as the Quran warns us, far from being dhikr, they may have the opposite effect:

[Let not your worldly possessions and your children make you neglectful of Allah's remembrance. But spend in the way of Allah.] (Al-Munafiqun 63:9-10)

The Methods of Dhikr

We have thus far discussed the significance, meaning and scope of dhikr. Let us now turn to the various forms and methods of dhikr. How do we remember Allah in the morning and evening, during the day and at night and while standing, sitting or

reclining? There are basically two forms of dhikr.

The first involves continuous and sustained inner awareness of Allah in all that we say and do in our daily lives.

The second involves mechanisms, whether performed individually or collectively,

that help to develop the first.

Sustained Awareness of Allah

Let us begin with a discussion of the first form and its methods. How can you remember Allah throughout the normal course of your day without withdrawing from the routine of your daily worldly life?

How can you ensure that your personal life, family life, professional life and other activities all continue in full swing, and yet, at the same time, ensure that your life as a whole — every moment of it — is permeated with remembrance of Allah? Such an all-pervading dhikr can be an onerous task, but one you can accomplish with some ease.

Let me remind you of four states of consciousness that you must strive to develop by remembering certain things, absorbing them and reminding yourself of them often.

1. Say to yourself: "I am in Allah's presence; He is watching me."

If ever you are alone, He is the second and that if you are two, He is the third.

[He is with you wherever you are.] (Al-Mujadalah 58:7)

[He is nearer to you than your jugular vein.](Qaf 50:16)

He is watching everything that you do and hearing everything that you say. He is ever present and His knowledge is all encompassing. Remind yourself of this as often as you can, and throughout the day, every time you begin a new task, and every

time you speak.

Indeed, your aim should be to impress this on your heart in such a way that it ultimately becomes your very breath. When the Prophet was asked by a Companion about the best method of purifying himself, he replied: "You should always remember that Allah is with you wherever you are." (*At-Tirmidhi*)

2. Say to yourself: "Everything I have has been given to me by Allah."

All that there is — surrounding you, on you and in you — comes from Allah alone. There is none that creates or gives anything but Allah (An-Nahl 16:78; Ya-Sin 36:33-35.)

Therefore, reflect upon all the blessings that He has created you with and

be thankful to Him. In all the dhikr that the Prophet has taught us, gratefulness to Allah is a constant theme.

Many of these dhikrs are simple to learn, and indeed, it was the most simple of his dhikr that he used most frequently. When the Prophet rose in the morning, he would say *Alhamdu lillah*; whenever he ate or drank he would say *Alhamdu lillah*; and even when he relieved himself he would give thanks to Allah.

Learn as many of the dhikrs as you can, and throughout the day, as you witness all that Allah has blessed you with, punctuate your day with these dhikrs.

If ever you appear to be short of things to be thankful for, recall the hadith of the Prophet: "There are 360 joints in the body and for each joint you must give a *sadaqah* [thanks or charity] each day." (Al-Bukhari.)

You must give a *sadaqah* for each one of them because without any one of them you will be incomplete and handicapped. You must do this on a daily basis for should

any one of them become damaged one day, you will similarly become incapacitated.

Additionally, you may remind yourself that, as we now know from our knowledge of human physiology, your heart beats an average of 72 times a minute. Every time it beats, it does so with the permission of Allah.

The moment He withdraws that permission, the heart will stop beating and your life will certainly come to an end. If you feel that there is nothing else to thank Allah for, then thank Him for the life that He has given you — for, so long as there is life, there is hope.

3. Say to yourself: "Nothing in this world can happen without His permission."

Everything lies in the hands of Allah. No harm can befall you and no benefit can reach you except as Allah ordains. It is as the Quran informs us:

[If God should touch you with misfortune, none can remove it but He; and if He should touch you with good fortune, He has power over all things. He alone holds sway over His creatures; He is the All-Wise, the All-Aware.] (Al-An`am 6:17-18)

The Prophet Muhammad would supplicate to Allah after each Prayer: "O Allah, whatever You want to give me, no one can stop it from coming to me and whatever You want to prevent from coming to me, nobody can give to me."

Prayer after Prayer, you should recite these beautiful words. And beyond that, remind yourself as much as you can and throughout the day, especially as you expect something to happen, or not to happen, that everything happens only as He

commands, and by His permission.

4. Say to yourself: "I am going to return to Allah one day and that day could be today."

You do not know when you will leave this world. It may be that the coming morning is your last morning, or perhaps the coming evening is your last evening. Indeed, it may be that this hour is your last hour, or even, that this moment is your last

moment.

Such an uncertainty does not, of course, justify a complete withdrawal from this life so as to prepare for the next in some monastic fashion. It is important, however, that you are always conscious of this uncertainty, to the extent that it motivates you to spend every

moment of your remaining life seriously, considering it as a gift from Allah and spending the resources He has blessed you with — time, ability and energy — as He has advised.

Then, and only then, will your life have achieved what is required of it, and your return will achieve what is required of it. To help you attain this state of consciousness, recall and reflect upon the following Quranic verse as much as

you can and throughout the day:

[From Allah we came and to Him we shall return.](Al-Baqarah 2:156)

These are the four states of consciousness that can help us achieve a life completely devoted to the remembrance of Allah.

To try to reach these four states simultaneously, and with sincerity, can only purify you. To try in a determined fashion to reach these four states will lead you inevitably to Paradise.

By **Khurram Murad**

True
Form: ذکر

There are three types of *dhikr*:

- the *dhikr* of the heart,
- *dhikr* with the tongue,
- with the two of them together.

Ahadith mentioning virtues/importance of dhikr

Abu Hurairah reported that the prophet Muhammad said, "Cursed is the world and what it contains with the exception of the remembrance of Allah and what He Loves, and the one who teaches others (useful knowledge) and the one who acquires knowledge." From Sunan al-Tirmidhi

Muhammad would often tell his companions, "Shall I tell you about the best of deeds, the most pure in the Sight of your Lord, about the one that is of the highest order and is far better for you than spending gold and silver, even better for you than meeting your enemies in the battlefield where you strike at their necks and they at yours?" The companions replied, "Yes, O Messenger of Allah!" Muhammad said, "Remembrance of Allah." From Sunan al-Tirmidhi

Abu Hurairah narrated that the Prophet Muhammad said, "People will not sit in an assembly in which they remember Allah without the angels surrounding them, mercy covering them, and Allah Mentioning them among those who are with Him." From Sahih Muslim

So what is Dhikr? Sounds like a cool word. Dhikr, looks pretty neat in Arabic script.

Dhikr, according to the book FiqhIslamic Jurisprudence. -Us-SunnahWay/method/saying or deed of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). by Sheik Sayyed As Sabeeq, mentions that, "All words of praise and glory to AllahIt is an Arabic term and is the most correct name for the one true God (Almighty). The term 'Allah' is derived from Al-Ilaah and means literally 'The One', 'The God' or 'The One God'. , extolling His Perfect Attributes of Power and Majesty, Beauty and Sublimeness, whether one utters them by tongue or says them silently in one's heart, are known as Dhikr or remembrance of Allah."

Allah is so great, every time I see the glittering stars in the sky, resembling diamonds and pearls, I call to mind the greatness of Allah. Every time I see the various creatures Allah has created I reflect upon the greatness of Allah, the rainbow-colored parrots in the Amazon Forest, the birds how they soar so high in the sky only by the will of Allah.
