

REMEMBRANCE OF ALLAH

February

- Why does the remembrance of Allah can be greater in rank than jihad and what role does Dhikr play in motivating action?
- why is relying only on obligatory acts of worship considered spiritually incomplete, even though they lead to success?
- How do Nawafil protect a believer from loss caused by mistakes or shortcomings in obligatory worship?
- Why did the Promised Messiah (as) criticise certain Sufis, and what misunderstanding did some people develop because of this criticism?
- What makes innovative and theatrical forms of Dhikr spiritually harmful, and how does Huzoor explain their long-term effect on Muslims?



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Remembrance of Allah

that the remembrance of Allah holds a very high rank. The Companions^{ra} asked the Messenger of Allah whether its rank was even higher than striving in the cause of Allah? He replied in the affirmative, that it was even greater in rank than this [jihad] because the remembrance of Allah encourages one to undertake the striving.

Need of Greater Attention to *Dhikr* in Our Community

This, then, is the importance and necessity of *dhikr*. Yet there are some aspects of *Dhikr-e-Ilāhī* towards which our Jamā'at is not paying attention, or if there is interest, it is very little. From my childhood, God Almighty has naturally inclined me to reflect and ponder. Since the very time of my maturity, I have been thinking about it and even now I am concerned that the deficiency regarding the remembrance of Allah which exists in our Jamā'at, must be removed.

The Promised Messiah, peace be upon him, has laid great emphasis on prayer. And thanks are due to God Almighty that our Jamā'at makes much use of prayer. The Promised Messiah^{as} has likewise laid great stress on the remembrance of Allah, but the attention that needs to be paid to this has not yet been given to it. One primary reason for this is that British education has somewhat changed the thinking of people and under the influence of European education, people question what the utility of

reciting the names of God could be. And what could be the benefit of someone sitting in solitude, repeatedly reciting لا اله الا الله [Lā ilāhā illallāh—There is no one worthy of worship except Allah] or God is *Quddūs* [the Holy], God is *ʿAlīm* [the All-Knowing], God is *Khabīr* [the All-Aware], God is *Qādir* [the All-Powerful], or God is *Khāliq* [the Creator]? None whatsoever, so there is no need for this.

In addition, because the members of our Jamāʿat are enrolled in Western education, they too have come under its influence. Secondly, there are people in our Jamāʿat who belong to the farming community. These people had never truly understood what *Dhikr-e-Ilāhī* is, and what its benefit is. Hence, until they are all fully informed, and unless they are made to understand in an excellent manner, they cannot pay heed to it. This is the reason why they are deficient in the remembrance of Allah.

Ṣalāt is also the remembrance of Allah which, by the grace of Allah, our Jamāʿat observes very regularly. However, there are other forms of remembering Allah which are necessary and obligatory. Concerning these, although I cannot say that they are non-existent in our Jamāʿat, I will definitely say that they are lacking. And some people do not put them into practice and this also is a very big flaw.

Listen! If someone has beautiful facial features, but has deformed eyes, ears, or nose, will he be called handsome? Not at all! Everyone would call him unattractive. In the same way, if some people of our Jamāʿat do not employ some methods of remembering Allah, then their example is akin to a person who is wearing a very expensive coat, shirt, jacket, and trousers, but fails to wear shoes or a turban over his head. Despite his attire being decent,

the missing shoes or turban will make his appearance defective. And people of high status do not accept a defect in anything of theirs.

Thus, when not engaging in the remembrance of Allah in all the ways is a defect, and on top of that, when we also prove that Allah the Exalted has commanded that methods of remembering Allah other than *Ṣalāt* be adopted as well—whether anyone fully comprehends the underlying wisdom or not—and the Holy Prophet^{ṣas} has also directed along these lines, then it is essential that in order to achieve excellence in spirituality, we should also act upon these ways of remembering Allah.

The reason for proper attention not being given in our Jamā'at to the offering of *Nawāfil* [supererogatory worship] is also that these people have not understood the benefits of this way of remembering Allah. They think that by performing the obligatory worship they have done their duty, whereas the Holy Prophet^{ṣas} says, and he does not say so himself, but rather says that Allah the Exalted told him that: وَمَا يَزَالُ عَبْدِي يَتَقَرَّبُ إِلَيَّ بِالتَّوَافِلِ حَتَّى أُجِبَّهُ فَإِذَا أُجِبْتُهُ قَادًا أُحِبُّنَاهُ. —By offering *Nawāfil*, My servant gets so close to Me that I become the ears with which he hears, the eyes with which he sees, the hands with which he holds, and the feet with which he walks (*Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, Kitābur-Riqāq, Bābut-Tawāḍu'; Hadith 6502).

From this you can understand the rank that God Almighty has accorded to *Nawāfil*, and how great a status has been given to the person who performs them. It is as if through them, God Almighty elevates a human being to such a degree that he begins to absorb His attributes within himself. Therefore, *Nawāfil* are not an ordinary matter. But alas, many people pay them no heed!

The truth of the matter is that there is immense weakness and laziness in man. Therefore, he puts in the least amount of labour. This is indeed the reason why God Almighty, who knows the weaknesses of His creatures, and who is Most Merciful towards them, has appointed some acts of worship as obligatory and others as voluntary. He appointed the obligatory acts of worship so that anyone who fulfils them will be above reproach.

Thus, it is narrated in a hadith that a person came to the Holy Prophet^{sas} and enquired about Islam:

خَمْسُ صَلَوَاتٍ فِي الْيَوْمِ وَاللَّيْلَةِ فَقَالَ هَلْ عَلَيَّ غَيْرُهَا؟ قَالَ لَا إِلَّا أَنْ تَطُوعَ قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ وَصِيَامَ رَمَضَانَ قَالَ هَلْ عَلَيَّ غَيْرُهُ؟ قَالَ لَا إِلَّا أَنْ تَطُوعَ قَالَ وَذَكَرَ لَهُ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ الزَّكَاةَ قَالَ هَلْ عَلَيَّ غَيْرُهَا؟ قَالَ لَا إِلَّا أَنْ تَطُوعَ قَالَ فَأَذْبَرَ الرَّجُلُ وَهُوَ يَقُولُ وَاللَّهِ لَا أَرِي نِدَى عَلَى هَذَا وَلَا أَنْقُصُ قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ أَفْلَحَ إِنْ صَدَقَ.
The Holy Prophet^{sas} said to him, ‘Five Prayers during the day and night.’

He asked, ‘Are there any more other than these?’ The Holy Prophet^{sas} said, ‘No, unless you offer by way of *nafl* [voluntarily].’ Then the Holy Prophet^{sas} continued, ‘Fasting during the month of Ramadan.’

Again the man asked, ‘Are there any more fasts other than these?’

The Holy Prophet^{sas} responded, ‘No, unless you perform it by way of *nafl*.’ Then the Holy Prophet^{sas} told him that in Islam there is also Zakat—the giving of alms.

Upon hearing this the person left saying, ‘By God, I shall neither add anything to these, nor shall I subtract anything from them.’

The Holy Prophet^{sas} said, ‘If he speaks the truth, he has

attained success.’ (*Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, Kitābul-Īmān, Bāb az-Zakātu min al-Islām; Hadith 46)

From this we learn that the person who fulfils the obligatory affairs properly, achieves success. However, the prudent and far-sighted person does not restrict himself to the discharge of only obligatory matters, but rather he enters the field of *Nawāfil* so that if there remained any shortcoming in the observance of the obligatory works, they may be compensated for in this way.

For example, five daily Prayers have been prescribed for the day and night. A person who offers these Prayers but does not offer the *Nawāfil* [Prayers] may run into a situation possibly that due to some error on his part, one of his Prayers gets rejected. So, on the Day of Judgement he will have to face the penalty for this shortcoming.

Thus, it is narrated in a hadith that once when the Holy Prophet^{ṣas} was present in the mosque, a person came and offered his Prayer. He asked him to repeat his Prayer, so the man offered his Prayer again. The Holy Prophet^{ṣas} asked him to repeat it again, and so the man offered his Prayer for a third time. When the Holy Prophet^{ṣas} asked him to offer it for the fourth time, he said, ‘O Messenger of Allah, by God I do not know how to pray better than this; tell me how I should offer the Prayer.’ The Holy Prophet^{ṣas} responded, ‘You were rushing with your Prayer and therefore it was not accepted. Pray slowly’ (*Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, Kitābul-Azān, Bāb Wujūbil-Qir’ati Lil-Imāmi wal-Ma’mūmi fiṣ-Ṣalawāti Kullihā fil-Ḥaḍari was-Safari wa mā Yujharu fihā wa mā Yukhāfatu; Hadith 757).⁵

Thus, errors of this type sometimes occur, as a consequence

of which the Prayer is not accepted. However, for the person who also offers the *Nawāfil* together with the obligatory Prayers, if some Prayer of his is not accepted, then the *Nawāfil* can come in handy and may fulfil that deficiency. The example of this is just like the case of someone who goes to take a test for which he needs just fifty marks to pass, so he goes and solves just that many questions as are worth fifty marks, walking away believing that he has passed. This would be a mistake on his part because it is possible that some question that he attempted may have been answered incorrectly and, thus, he may be unable to secure the fifty marks and he may end up failing. It is for this very reason that the students who are smart and intelligent do not do this, but rather they attempt the questions that they know, and even the ones that they don't. They try to solve all of them thinking that perhaps the marks combined may help them to pass.

Similarly, if a traveller embarks upon a journey and takes just enough money with him as he expects will be needed, it sometimes occurs that his estimate turns out to be wrong and he ends up enduring extraordinary hardship. It is for this reason that shrewd and intelligent people begin their journey taking with them more than what they think is needed so that if they end up facing any unexpected expenses, they won't have to face any difficulties. So, *Nawāfil* are like the unexpected expenses and are most essential. Accordingly, special attention needs to be paid to offering them.

The second reason for why the people of our Jamā'at do not pay full attention to *Dhikr-e-Ilāhī* is the following. The Promised Messiah^{as} has written a lot to refute the so-called sufis [mystics] born in this age, who spread many kinds of innovations.

Addressing them, he said that their uttering of prayer-phrases repetitively—parrot-fashion—will produce no results: ‘What are you doing sitting on your prayer mats when Islam is being attacked from all four sides? Why don’t you get up and give a reply?’

The Promised Messiah^{as} has denounced them in this way—and they indeed deserved denunciation. Nonetheless, by this, some people have mistakenly understood that perhaps the very act of sitting and engaging in the remembrance of Allah is frivolous in itself, whereas remembering Allah in this way is not pointless. Rather, the very purpose of it is that God’s holiness and praise should be proclaimed in this way.

Nevertheless, since those people merely engaged in the remembrance of Allah sitting in their homes and did nothing in the outside world where God Almighty was being condemned, it is for this reason that the Promised Messiah^{as} reprimanded them and said that if those people actually love God Almighty and proclaim His holiness and praise, then just as they declare His purity and praise Him while sitting in their homes, they should do the same outside of their homes as well. Since they had abandoned performing their duty of calling people towards goodness and forbidding them from evil due to their laziness and negligence, they were reprimanded for being hypocritical; for, if they held true love and passion for God Almighty in their hearts, then what would be the reason withholding them from coming out and responding to the opponents when they were attacking God Almighty? And what was the reason for them not to glorify God Almighty on the public platform as they did in the quiet corners of their homes?

MISUNDERSTANDINGS ABOUT DHIKR



Misguided Forms of *Dhikr*

Moreover, another reason for the Promised Messiah^{as} reprimanding them was that according to the saying, ‘Whatever an ill man adopts becomes an illness’, these sufis and *gaddī nashīns* [the custodians of shrines] exploited *Dhikrullah* in such ways and forms that they defaced it altogether. And no trace was left of the manner in which Islam had presented it.

So what is understood by *Dhikrullah* nowadays? It is a heart-rending cry raised to a high pitch and shouted out so loudly that the peace of the whole neighbourhood and the worship of all those nearby is disturbed. This is what they call delivering a strike upon the heart—as if the heart, for them, is something into which

لا اله الا الله [Lā ilāha illallāh—There is no one worthy of worship but Allah] can be thrust by force!

Similarly, some others have invented the practice that they gather to listen to poetry or arrange for *qawwālis* [sufi devotional songs employed as a form of worship], and female dancers come and perform—yet they contend that this a gathering getting warmed up for the remembrance of Allah. They then appease the heart so that the sounds of ‘Allah, Allah’ emanate from it. In short, strange and sundry things have been invented.

At some places hearts are being enlivened; at others, blows are being struck upon hearts; while yet at others, attempts are made for sounds to emanate from the soul—and they have assigned these names themselves! At times they say that they raise the remembrance of Allah from the heart, which goes to prostrate at the very Throne of God before returning. And at other times they say that they cause the sound of ‘Allah, Allah’ to emanate from every limb of their body. These and many other such innovations have been invented by them.

There are also others who recite some verse of the Holy Quran and dance. Some engage in the remembrance of Allah in the manner that one person recites some couplets of poetry etc. and others dance and say that they are in a state of ecstasy and have become unconscious. Then, while they are seated in the gathering, they burst out yelling, ‘Allah! Allah!’ and jump suddenly. So these are the strange and sundry types of *dhikr* that have been introduced, whereas they have absolutely nothing to do with the religion of Islam. Notwithstanding, on account of this, it cannot be said that

Dhikr-e-Ilāhī is a bad thing. Yes! It can be said that these innovations which these people have created are bad.

These people, however, are not bothered in the least, despite the fact that the Holy Prophet^{sas} has said: **كُلُّ بَدْعَةٍ صَلَاةٌ وَكُلُّ صَلَاةٍ فِي النَّارِ**. ‘Every innovation that is introduced into the Faith is misguidance and misguidance leads to Hell’ (*Sunan an-Nasa’i*, Kitāb Ṣalātul-Īdāini, Bāb Kaifal-Khuṭbah; Hadith 1578).

This indeed is why the forms of *dhikr* invented by these people are incapable of taking them closer to Allah; on the contrary, they take them even further away from Him. Thus, ever since these types of *dhikr* have been introduced—precisely since then—the Muslims have been drifting farther and farther away from God Almighty. As all of these are innovations, and when people act contrary to the directives of Allah and the Holy Prophet^{sas}, their spirituality will inevitably weaken, and it is for this reason that spirituality is being obliterated from among the Muslims.

Secondly, these innovations have a particular quality that makes one feel pleasure and exhilaration on the surface, but because all that pleasure and exhilaration is artificial, for that reason—ignorant of true pleasures—a person chases the artificial ones and is thus destroyed. This is like a person suffering from a stomach ache who, instead of seeking proper treatment, takes opium and sleeps. The temporary result of this will be that the person will feel comfort due to the loss of consciousness but, in reality, he will be moving towards destruction and there will be a time when that very pain will kill him.