

## Aim of Dhikr

From *Self Building* by Ayatullah Ibrahim Amini

God's Remembrance is a great worship and is one of the best method of self-building, self-perfection and spiritual migration towards God-Almighty. Let us examine what is really meant by Dhikr whose importance has been so much emphasized in traditions and Qur'anic verses.

Does it mean simply recital of sentences like: Glory to God, All praises belong to God and there is no god but God (subhan allahi, walhamdu lillahi, wala ilaha illa- lahu) or is there any other aim behind this?

Do these sentences without paying any inner attention towards their esoteric meanings still provide important effect? The phrase dhikr in the dictionary has been defined in the sense of simply recital as well as in the sense of recital with heart's presence. Similarly, is the case in traditions where this phrase has been used with both meanings i.e. recital with tongue as well as recital with heart's presence.

In traditions it has been narrated that Prophet Moses (a.s.) while reciting hymns, asked God-Almighty:

*Oh God! What is the reward for someone who remembers you by tongue and heart? God replied; 'I will place him under the shadow of My Throne and My Own Protection on the Day of Resurrection.'*

Therefore, as could be seen in the tradition the phrase dhikr has been used in both senses i.e. dhikr by means of tongue as well as dhikr by means of heart. Also, there are plenty of traditions in which dhikr has been used in both meanings, but mostly it has been used in the sense of heart's presence with esoteric attention -which is indeed true and perfect dhikr.

God's Remembrance may be defined as a state of spirituality and discerning the truth with esoteric attention towards the Lord of Universe, and knowing that He is the Overseer and Supervisor of all our actions at all times. Someone who remembers God-Almighty in such a manner, acts according to His commands, performs compulsory obligations and sustains himself from forbidden acts. Therefore, from the point of view of these considerations we may conclude that dhikr is not an easy thing. The Holy Prophet (S) said to Imam 'Ali (a):

*There are three things of special strength for my Ummah: First: Fellowship and equality with brother believers in wealth. Second: Treating others justly against the self. Third: God's Remembrance in all situations.*

*What is meant by dhikr is not simply recital sentences like: Glory to God; All praises belong to God; and there is no god but God (Subhan allahi, Wal hamdu lillahi wala ilahi illallahu), rather dhikr is defined as the state of being so much in remembrance of God-Almighty that whenever one is encountered with a forbidden act, he should fear God-Almighty and should refrain himself from its commitments.*

The Commander of the Faithful Imam ‘Ali (a.) said: *Do not engage yourself in dhikr in the state of negligence and never forget God-Almighty. Remember Him with perfection so that your tongue and hearts become synchronized and your esoteric and exoteric affairs are in conformity with each other. One cannot engage himself in real dhikr but to forget his self completely and while performing deeds he should think of only God-Almighty and should not notice his own existence.*

Imam al-Sadiq (a.s.) said: *Whoever remembers God-Almighty truly will become obedient; whoever is negligent of Him will certainly indulge into sins, His obedience means guidance and sinning indicates deviation. The dhikr and negligence are the roots of obedience and transgression respectively. Therefore, consider your heart as the worshipping point (Qibla), and keep your tongue still without motion except by permission of heart, by approval of wisdom, and with the consent of belief because, God-Almighty is aware of your apparent and hidden affairs.”*

*Be like someone whose soul is being confiscated from his body or like someone who is standing before the Lord to be questioned about his deeds. Don't let the self be engaged in any other thing except discharging Divine obligations which are important for you. With the tears of shame, and grief cleanse and purify the contamination of your heart.”*

*Know that God-Almighty has remembered you therefore, you should too engage yourself in dhikr, because, He remembered you while being absolutely needless of you. Therefore, your remembrance by God-Almighty will make you more perfect, exalted, acquainted, and delightful as compared to God's Remembrance by you.*

*Acquaintance with God's Remembrance will increase your humility, courtesy, and decency in front of Him, resulting in your being able to witness His past benevolence and blessings bestowed upon you. At this stage your obedience might appear to you as more but in front of God's favors to you, it will be something very small.”*

*Therefore, do perform your deeds strictly for the sake of God-Almighty only. If you perceived your dhikr as big it will result in hypocrisy, egotism, ignorance, harshness, and negligence in appreciation of Divine blessings and favors. Such dhikr will not bear any fruits except becoming farther away from God-Almighty and with the passage of time will not produce any positive effect except fear and sorrow.”*

*As the Holy Prophet (S) said: 'I am helpless to hymn Your praise (the way you truly deserves). Your essence is such - the manner in which You praised Yourself. Therefore, the Prophet (S) did not attach any worth to his dhikr because, he was aware of the fact that remembrance of His servants by God-Almighty is far superior than the God's Remembrance by His servants.*

*Therefore, those whose rank is much lower than the Holy Prophet (S) should surely consider their dhikr as insignificant. Because of these considerations someone who really wants to recite God's dhikr must understand that unless and until God-Almighty remembers him and bestows upon him His special grace –he would not be in a position to offer God's dhikr.*

As can be seen from these narrations, the heart's attention and esoteric presence have been defined as the real meanings of dhikr. Furthermore, simply heart's attention and esoteric presence is not enough, rather what is required is effective esoteric presence whose indications have been identified as obedience of mandatory obligations and avoidance of forbidden things.

But it does not mean that only oral recital of sentences like: "There is no god but God"; "Glory to God". And "all praises to God," (la ilahi illallahu, subhan allahi, and al hamdu lillahi) should not be considered evidence of true dhikr, because these sentences in themselves reflect degrees of God's dhikr. Even this dhikr by tongue flows from the heart's fountainhead. Someone, who recites these dhikr by tongue certainly is having some attention by heart towards God-Almighty however small it may be, and because of this he is reciting these sentences by his tongue.

From the point of view of Islam, simply recital of these sentences and other dhikr is desirable and carries spiritual reward subject to it being performed with the intention of God's Nearness. Incidentally we may mention that in case of daily prayers we are strictly obliged to recite similar sentences by tongue and to perform other related rituals outwardly while we know that the heart's presence and esoteric attention is the real spirit behind the daily prayers.