

## The Degrees of Dhikr

From *Self Building* by Ayatullah Ibrahim Amini

Dhikr consists of various degrees or ranks the first and lowest of them begins with the recital of invocation by tongue, and continues till the degree of absolute perfection, which terminates into attaining the stage of feeling being ceased to exist, witnessing the supreme reality and becoming annihilated into His Essence (*Shahood* and *fana*).

At the very first stage, since the recitor pays heart's attention towards God-Almighty, starts reciting special dhikr by tongue with the intention of God's Nearness, without paying any attention to their meanings.

At the second stage, although he, recites dhikr by tongue with the intention of God's Nearness, but at the same time also convey their meanings to his mind. At the third stage, the tongue follows the heart, since the heart pays attention towards God-Almighty and in his esoteric essence believes in the meanings and contents of dhikr, therefore orders the tongue for their recital.

At the fourth stage, the wayfarer attains esoteric presence, and perfect heart's presence with respect to God-Almighty, considers Him as an overseer of his actions and witnesses his own existence under God's exalted presence. At this stage the experiences of wayfarers differs widely in accordance to the degree of perfection achieved by them.

As much as they become detached from other than God, in the same proportion they become attached to God-Almighty ultimately achieving the highest and most exalted positions of being ceased to exist (*inqata*), countenance (*laqa*), and annihilation (*fana*).

The wayfarer at this stage -which is the most exalted position has teared off all the veils of ignorance and falseness and has attached himself to the Supreme Source of all Blessings and Perfection.

He has removed himself from everything including his self and has returned towards God-Almighty by cutting all his ties with other than God and reserving his pure love and affection for God-Almighty. He does not see any perfection except God-Almighty so that he could become attached to him, and does not find any companion to become intimate with him.

These purest servants of God have made their access into the supreme Infinite Source of Grandeur, Majesty, Perfection, Blessings and Illumination and are able to witness the Beauty and Illumination of God's Essence with their esoteric eyes. They are not ready to attach their heart and pay attention towards the metaphorical phenomenon of this world even for an instant.

Because they have reached to the Fountain Head of Absolute Beauty and Perfection and, therefore, metaphorical and fictitious perfection do not have any worth in their eyes. They burn in the love, affection and countenance of their beloved and are not ready to exchange this pleasure even if they are offered both the worlds, and if they encounter world's phenomenon, regards them as reflections of Divine Illumination and signs of God's Perfect Existence.

The Commander of the Faithful Imam ‘Ali (a) was asked:

*Have you seen the God to whom you worship ?*

*‘I do not worship a God who could not be seen’. Replied the Imam. ‘How did you see Him’? He was asked. ‘! God-Almighty could not be seen with physical eyes rather hearts witness His existence through the reality of their faith.’ Replied the Imam.”*

Imam al-Husayn (a.) said:

*In order to prove Your Existence how can a thing could be referred as an argument which in itself is dependent upon You? Is there exist any manifestation for other than You which You lack, so that he would make You revealed? When were You absent so that an argument will be required? When were You away so that the indications and circumstances of Your reappearance would be needed? Blind is the eye which does not see You as an Overseer upon his deeds. And how unfortunate looser is your servant, who have been deprived of Your Love.”*

The Commander of the Faithful Imam ‘Ali (a.s.) in his hymns for the Holy Month of Shaban said:

*Oh God! Bestow upon me absolute separation from everything except You, enlighten the esoteric eyes of our hearts with Your Beauty and Grandeur ,so that they could tear off the veils of light and become attached to the Supreme Source of Absolute-Perfection. May our souls become united with Your Holy-Essence.*

Imam al-Sajjad (a.s.) describes God's righteous servants as follows:

*Oh Lord! The tongues are helpless to offer Your Praise and Adoration, worthy of Your Majesty and Splendor,” the faculties of wisdom cannot comprehend Your Beauty and Glory; the eyes are powerless to be able to witness the manifestation of Your Beauty. For your servants, in their search to attain the exalted position of Your Enlightenment, You have closed all the avenues except to admit their impotence and helplessness.”*

*“Oh Lord of the Majesty and Splendor! Please consider us among Your those servants in whose hearts the sapling of Your Countenance has been planted and whose hearts are saturated with the grief and sorrow of Your Love.*

*Thus, they are moving towards the nest of most tender and sublime thoughts with the hope of living in pleasure forever in the most magnanimous and splendid garden of manifestation and nearness of their God. They drink the cups of Your Grace from the Fountain Head of Your Love and entering the wide freeways of fraternity and pleasure.”*

*“The curtains have been rolled up from their esoteric eyes, the darkness of doubt has been removed from their beliefs and the palpitations of contradiction have been calmed down in their hearts. Certainly of Your Knowledge have made them as large hearted,” strive to surpass others*

*in the race of piety, in their trade with God-Almighty, have been rewarded with the most delicious and pleasurable drinks,”*

*In their union with their beloved possess a clean and pure inner self while encountering fearful situation are assured with the Divine guidance towards safety” In their return to God-Almighty have attained the most tranquil state; In their journeying towards eternal prosperity and salvation have attained the stage of certainty; In witnessing the glory of their beloved their eyes shine with joy, because of accomplishing the cherished goal, they now possess a peaceful inner self and have profited themselves in their bartering this world with the Hereafter.”*

*“Oh God! How pleasing are the memories of inspiration relevant to Your Invocation for the hearts! How sweet is the journeying towards you by means of pondering about the unseen! How much delicious is the taste of Your Love! And how much pleasurable and gratifying is the drinking of drinks of Your Nearness !”*

*Therefore, oh God! we seek Your shelter again banishment or getting lost. And accept us among the most distinguished gnostics, most righteous servants, most veracious obedient, and most sincere worshippers. Oh Lord of Majesty and Splendor, and Oh God of Mercy and Compassion we swore you of your Blessing, oh Thou Who are the Best of Blessers.”*

In summary, the fourth position is a position which is most distinguished and exalted and in itself consists of various degrees and ranks which are infinite and continue till the very Holy Essence, Self-Existent (*Wajib al- Wajood*), the Source of Absolute Perfection and Infinite Beauty.