

The Sufi Ritual of *Zikr*: A Historical Study

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Abstract

The aim of the study is twofold: to describe the origin, development and historical importance of *Zikr* in early period of Islam and to analyze historical emergence of the practice of *Zikr* to its present form as Sufi ritual with the emergence of Sufism and within different Sufi Orders. The Sufi ritual of *Zikr*, characterized by the repetitive remembrance of God, stands as a cornerstone of Islamic mysticism. Islam's spiritual side is represented by Sufism. It is a Sufi quest to be near Allah. In order to become closer to Allah, Self-purification is essential and the observance of *Zikr* leads to purification. The Quran mentions *Zikr* at several places, and the Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W) and his companions also laid great stress on the value of *Zikr* and practiced it. Following the rise and development of Sufism, *Zikr* is regarded as a Sufi practice and became a Sufi ritual. This important ritual is mentioned only in few brief accounts but no detailed study is available. Some studies focused on the philosophical, theological, psychological and physical impact of *Zikr*. More research is needed to trace its evolution from its early manifestations to its contemporary practices. So, the present study focuses this aspect by addressing the questions such as what is the origin and history of Sufi ritual of *Zikr*? What role does *Zikr* play within the framework of Islamic devotion and spirituality? How it was practiced by Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W) and his companions? What are the key practices and rituals associated with *Zikr*? Why Sufis gave importance to *Zikr*? When and how does *Zikr* function as a spiritual discipline within Sufi communities and became a Sufi ritual? What is its significance for different Sufi Orders and how it is practiced by different Sufi Orders?

Key Words: Sufi Rituals, *Zikr*, Origin, Development, Significance.

Introduction

Zikr is the distinctive Sufi ritual which means memory, remembrance, recollection or learn by heart. The metaphorical meaning of *Zikr* is honor, dignity, prayer, *Salah*, and divine texts.¹ *Zikr* is also spelled as *Dhikr*. Nwyia declared it 'a term borrowed from Byzantine Christianity.'² In Sufi terminology *Zikr* means 'to remember Allah all the time', keep Him in mind and never forget Him.³ 'Invocation' and to remember Allah with his Divine names both can be described as the

¹Ibn Manzur, *Lisan al-Arab*, ns. Yousef Khayyat- Nadim Mar'asli, Dar al-Lisan al-Arab, Beirut, ts.v. IV, p. 308; Firuzabadi, Mohammed Ibn Yaqub, *al-Kamus al-Muhid*, Egypt, 1952.v. II, p. 34; Asim Efendi, *Kamus Tercumesi, Matca-iOsmaniye*, Istanbul, 1304-1305, v. II, p. 346.

²Paul Nwyia, *Ibn-e-Ata Allah et la naissance de la confrerie sadilite* (Beirut, 1972), p. 251 as cited in Annemarie Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions Of Islam* (Lahore: Sange Meel Publication, 2003 Rpt., First Published 1975), p. 167.

³ Ali Tenik and Vahit Goktas, "Importance and Effects of Remembrance (Dhikr) In Socio- Psychological Terms" *AÜYFD XLIX Sufi Magazine* (2008), Sayı II, S. p. 217-236

meaning of *Zikr*.⁴ *Zikr* is the strong and important pillar to the path of God.⁵ Hazrat Ali (R.A) said that Divine approval can only be attained through *Zikr*.⁶ No one can reach Allah without the constant remembrance of Him because without his remembrance, life is only a wind *Baad*.⁷ *Zikr* is Arabic term which means recollection.⁸ This term refers to worship of Allah in Quran. The literal meaning of *Zikr* is remembering God.⁹ *Zikr* means to absorb oneself in the remembrance of Allah and forget everything which is ante-God. In this practice, a Sufi seeks nearness to Allah day and night and as a result *Zikr* becomes the legitimate part of his life.¹⁰ In Quran term '*Zikr*' refers 'to remember' or 'to recite'. Beside these meanings, this term is also used in Quran in some other meanings also *i.e.* in meaning of 'Quran' in Surah Hijr Verse 9; *Salah* in Surah Juma Verse 9 and Ankabut Verse 45; people of the book in Surah Anbiyya, Verse 7, remembering Allah in Surah Baqara, Verse 152; Surah Anbiyya, Verse 20 and in Surah Ahzab Verses 35, 41, 42, in meaning of refraining from evil, being just, not wishing for the world, and always remembering Allah's orders in Surah A'raf, Verse 205; Surah Kahf, Verse 24; Surah Munafiqun, Verse 9; Surah Nur Verse 37; Surah Rad Verse 28; Surah Ta Ha Verse 24, in meaning of religious practices like *hajj* (pilgrimage) and other similar practices Surah Baqara, Verse 198-203. The term *Zikr* is mentioned in Quran for two hundred and ninety-one times with its derivatives. Quran declared *Zikr* as crucial function of heart because it is the *Zikr* that calms the heart.¹¹ Allah says remember Allah while standing, sitting and laying.¹²

The attractive aspect of *Zikr* is that it can be done at any time or at any place. One can remember Allah anywhere in His world.¹³ The basis for the practice of *Zikr* is Quran. Quran laid stress on remembrance of Allah with His names. Several Verses are quoted from Quran that refers on remembrance of Allah with His Divine names *i.e.* the Quran Surah 18 Verse 24, Surah 33 Verse 40, Surah 13 Verse 28, Surah 2 Verse 152, Surah 13 Verse 24, Surah 2 Verse 152, Surah 62 Verse 10, Surah 33 Verse 41, Surah 29 Verse 45.¹⁴ About the importance of *Zikr*, Abu Musa Al-Ashairi (R.A) reported the saying of the Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W): "The example of the one who remembers his Lord and the one who doesn't remember his Lord is like that of living creature and a dead."¹⁵ The Prophet (S.A.W) said "How might you like on the off chance that I disclosed to you that the most useful deed of all is to recollect Allah."¹⁶ Tirmazi described from Anas Bin Malik (R.A) that the Allah's apostle (S.A.W) said, "when you go by the greenhouses of Paradise, then feast." They asked, "O Prophet (S.A.W), what are the gardens of Heaven?" He stated, "The gatherings who recite *Zikr*!"¹⁷ He also said that everything has a polish and the polish of heart is

⁴ Muhammad Fida Hussain, *The Practices of Sufis*, p. 22, ebook found on www.fidahussain.myasa.net/wp/wp-content/uploads/2011/11/sufi-practices.pdf

⁵ Abul-Qasim Al-Qushayri. *Ar-Risala Fi Ilm At-Tasawwuf*. (Cairo, 1330 A.H 1912. A.D), P.35 as cited in Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, p. 167.

⁶ Hussain, *The Practices of Sufis*, p. 22

⁷ Abul-Majd Majdud Sanai. *Hadiqat al-haqiqat washariat at-tariqat*. Edited by Mudarris Razawi. (Tehran, 1950) p. 94.

⁸ Robert A. Fernea, *Nubian Ceremonial Life: Studies In Islamic Syncretism And Cultural Change*, Editor John G. Kennedy, (New York: American Univ S In Cairo Press, 2005), p. 33.

⁹ C. Glasse, *The Concise Encyclopaedia of Islam*, (London: Stacey International, 1989), p.97.

¹⁰ Hussain, *The Practices of Sufis*, p. 23.

¹¹ Tenik and Goktas, "Importance and Effects of Remembrance" p. 218.

¹² The Quran, *Surah Al Imran*, Chapter No. 3 Verse 191.

¹³ Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions Of Islam*, p. 167.

¹⁴ Antoon Geels, "A Note on the Psychology of *Dhikr*, the Halveti-Jerrahi Order of Dervishes in Istanbul", *The International Journal for the Psychology of Religion*, Vol 6, Issue 4, 1996. p. 56.

¹⁵ Sahih Bukhari, Hadees No. 6407.

¹⁶ Jam-e-Tirmizi, Daawat, p.6.

¹⁷ Jam-e-Tirmazi, Vol 3rd, Hadees No. 3510.

Zikrullah.¹⁸ Imam Qushayri wrote in *Risala-e-Qushayri* that *Zikr* is the strong support on the way of Allah. No one can reach Divine presence except with constant remembrance of Him.¹⁹ Ibne Abbas says that Allah has kept limit for man for all his obligatory duties except *Zikr*. There is no limit of it.²⁰ The literature on Sufism and the *Zikr* ritual encompasses a wide range of scholarly works, historical treatises, and ethnographic studies. Scholars such as Annemarie Schimmel in *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, and in *The Triumphal Sun: A Study of the Works of Jalaloddin Rumi*, Carl W. Ernst in *The Shambhala Guide to Sufism*, and William C. Chittick in *Sufism: A Beginner's Guide* have explored the theological, philosophical, and mystical dimensions of Sufism, shedding light on the significance of *Zikr* as a central practice within the Sufi tradition.

Additionally, studies by scholars like Seyyed Hossein Nasr in *Sufi Essays*, Idries Shah in his study *The Sufis*, and Henri Corbin in *Creative Imagination in the Sufism of Ibn Arabi* have delved into the symbolic, esoteric, and metaphysical aspects of *Zikr*, elucidating its deeper meanings and transformative potential. Ethnographic research conducted by scholars such as Kecia Ali in *Sufism: A Beginner's Guide*, Itzhak Weismann in his study *Sufism and Colonialism in North Africa*, and *Islam in South Asia: A Short History* by Jamal Malik has provided insights into the lived experiences of Sufi practitioners and the role of *Zikr* in shaping communal identities and spiritual practices. The book "*Classical Islam and the Naqshbandi Sufi Tradition*" by Shaykh Muhammad Hisham Kabbani likely may offer insights into the practices, significance, methods, and spiritual benefits of *Zikr* as understood and practiced within the Naqshbandi order. The article "Spiritual Healing and Sufi Practices" by Farhat Naz Rahman explores how *Zikr* serves as a method for spiritual healing, purification, and inner transformation within Sufi spirituality. It provides insights into the efficacy and significance of *Zikr* in spiritual healing processes through case studies, historical examples, and teachings from Sufi masters. While scholars have explored the philosophical, theological, psychological and therapeutic dimensions of Sufism and *Zikr*, there is still debate and ambiguity regarding the precise historical origins of the *Zikr* ritual. More research is needed to trace its evolution from its early manifestations to its contemporary practices. This historical study aims to provide a more nuanced understanding of the Sufi ritual of *Zikr* and its historical roots. By addressing these gaps, this research seeks to contribute to a broader scholarly discourse on Sufism and Islamic mysticism.

***Zikr* Practice: Early History**

It is believed that the importance was given to *Zikr* during the period of the Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W). Several Quranic exhortations and *Ahadis* are mentioned to support the importance of *Zikr*. Referring to the reply of the Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W) to the angel Gabriel's question about *Ihsan* Prophet said; '*Ihsan* is that you worship Allah as if you saw Him, or if you do not see Him, truthfully, He sees you.'²¹ The Islamic faith and practice is based on the three elements *i.e* Islam, *Iman* and *Ihsan*.²² First two component *Iman* and Islam focus on activity and accepting as referred in *Hadis* quoted above while third element *Ihsan* focuses on human intentionality. *Ihsan* intends to foster soul in such way that God cognizance is indoctrinated in every aspect of life.²³ The Prophet Muhammad and his companions worshipped with full concentration and in remembrance

¹⁸Shaykh Muhammad Hisham Kabbani, *Classical Islam and the Naqshbandi Sufi Tradition*, (U.S.A: Islamica Supreme Council of America, 2004), p. 46.

¹⁹Qushayri. *Ar-Risala Fi Ilm At-Tasawwuf*, p.37.

²⁰ Kabbani, *Classical Islam and the Naqshbandi Sufi Tradition*, p. 48.

²¹Sahi Bukhari, Hadis No. 4777

²² Farida Khanam, "The Origin and Evolution of Sufism" *Biannual Research Journal, Al-Idah*, 2011, p. 23.

²³Farhat Naz Rahman "Spiritual Healing And Sufi Practices" *Nova Journal of Sufism and Spirituality* Vol 2(1) 2014:1-9

of Allah and thus construed true *Zikr*.²⁴ *Ihsan* is described thus; it is that level of devotion in which a devotee is totally absorbed in the worship of Allah. There are several levels of excellence in devotion and true *Ihsan* is that level of devotion where a person experiences God's presence. The Prophet (S.A.W) and his companions worshiped Allah with that level of devotion. *Ashab-ul-suffah* 'the people of the porch' who lived at the porch in Madina Mosque worshiped with total devotion. Sufism is attributed to the third component *Ihsan* and pursued it.²⁵

Sufism: Contextual History

In Islam mysticism is known as Sufism. Several derivative roots of the word 'Sufi' are described by Sufisi.e *Safa*, *Suffah*, *Safwa*, *Saf*, *Suf* etc but scholars are agreed upon the word 'Suf' as its derivative root. *Suf* means 'wearing wool'.²⁶ Sufis traced the origin of Sufism from the Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W). They believe that the Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W) received two kinds of knowledge; *Ilme Safina* outer knowledge and *Ilm-e-Seena* inner knowledge²⁷ Ulama are the experts of Quran and *Ahadis* but *Ilm-e-Seena* knowledge of the heart remained to the Sufis.²⁸ It is believed that the Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W) entrusted *Ilm-e-Seena* to Hazrat Ali (R.A.) He is considered as fountainhead of all the Sufi Orders by Sufis.²⁹ Sufis traced the source of *Tasawwuf* from the life of the Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W) and his companions. The Prophet Muhammad was himself a Sufi throughout his life. He led ascetic life.³⁰ His companion also led simple and ascetic life. The term 'Sufism' was not known with this nomenclature during the period of the Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W) and his companion. The term 'ascetic' *Zuhd* was used at that time. The term Sufi was first introduced in 2nd century A.H after the death of the Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W).³¹ Abu Al Hashim Alkufi was known as first Sufi. Sufism originated from *Zuhd*. Asceticism flourished in first century A.H (7th century A.D.)³² The companions of the Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W) and the companions of the companions led ascetic life. They renunciate worldly pleasures but in later periods especially during the Umayyad and Abbasid period people started to remain busy in worldly affairs. The people who used to lead ascetic life at that time they were known as Sufis³³ and Sufism started to develop as a separate movement. During the 6th and 7th century A.D. Sufis mostly worshiped isolate. During 8th and 9th century there appeared small groups of Sufis which were called *Taifas*. Sufi *Khanqahs* lodges established. Till the 11th century these *Khanqahs* became a Sufi institution. Sufi Orders appeared during 12th and 13th century and ten Sufi Orders spread throughout the world. Order or *Silsila* is a spiritual lineage which links to the Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W) through the founder of the Order. Four Sufi Orders spread in Indian subcontinent. *Qadri Chishti Suharwardi* and *Naqashbandi*. The *Qadri* order, being an offshoot of *Tartawsi*³⁴ Order was originally founded by Shaykh Abdul Qadir Jilani (1071-1166).³⁵ The

²⁴ Khanam, "The Origin and Evolution of Sufism" p.23.

²⁵ Ibid., p. 25

²⁶ Shahabul Din Suhrawardi. *The Awarif-ul-Ma'arif*. Trans T. L. Clark, (Lahore: Sh. Muhammad Ashraf, 1973), p. 8

²⁷ Hussnain, *The Practices of Sufis*, p. 2.

²⁸ Khanam, "The origin and Evolution of Sufism" p.23.

²⁹ Hussnain, *The Practices of Sufis*, p. 2.

³⁰ Duncan Black Macdonald, *Aspects Of Islam*, (New York, Macmillan, 1911) p. 184.

³¹ John A. Subhān, *Sufism: Its Saints And Shrines*, (Lucknow: Publishing House, 1938), P.7

³² Fernea, *Nubian Ceremonial Life*, P. 42

³³ Musa Ahmad Karkarku, *Historical Perspectives On The Development Of Tasawwuf In*

West Africa With Particular Reference To Northern Nigeria, E-Proceeding Of The 2nd International Conference On Arabic Studies And Islamic Civilization, (Malaysia: Kuala Lumpur, 9-10 March 2015) p. 328

³⁴ **Tartawsiyya** Order is ascribed to Abu'l- Farah Tartawsi, who is the fourth in the line of succession from al-Junayd. The famous Shaykh 'Abdu'l-Qadir Gllanl, who founded the Qadiri Order, was fourth in spiritual succession from this Abu'l- Farah. Abu'l-Farah died in 1055 A. D (source: Subhān, *Sufism: Its Saints and Shrines*, P. 172

³⁵ Subhān, *Sufism: Its Saints and Shrines*, P. 176.

Suhrawardi order was founded by Sheikh Shahbudin Umar Suharwardi at Baghdad and the *Naqshbandi* order founded by Khwaja Baha' ud din Naqshbandi(1318-1389) is associated with the first pious caliph of Islam, Abu Bakr al-Siddiq.³⁶ The order was brought to in Indian subcontinent by Khwaja Baqi Billah. The *Chishti* order, traces its origin from Abu Ishaq Shami (d. 940) who lived in *Chisht* near Herat. However, the order was popularized in India by Muinuddin Chishti (d.1236) and established a center at Ajmer.³⁷ Almost all Sufi Orders link their chains back to the Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W) through Hazrat Ali (R.A). It is said that Hasan al-Basri (728AD) obtained the spiritual guidance from Hazrat Ali (R.A) and many of the Sufi Orders link their spiritual lineage back to Hazrat Ali (R.A)through Hassan Basri.³⁸ Only the Naqshbandi Order traces its origin through Hazrat Abu Bakr R.A back to the last Prophet. These Orders are different from each other in their organization training and rituals.³⁹The most important ritual of Sufi Orders is *Zikr*.

Emergence of *Zikras* Sufi Practice

It appears that the practice of *Zikr* turned out to be well established by the eleventh century, however there are also indications of its practice among prior Sufis. Al-Ghazali, attaches an extraordinary significance to *Zikr* as the single method, adapted by the Sufis, to focus the heart on nothing other than Allah.⁴⁰ The base of the belief system of early Sufi was severe ascetism which was depended on fear of God.⁴¹ According to Trimmingham the first organization of Sufism was appeared after 200 hundred years of the Prophet's death. The small groups of ascetics gathered to recite Quran and religious poems aloud.⁴² So, this recitation gradually took the liturgical form, and the Arabic term *Zikr* became the center of it. This term refers to the worship of God in Quran but Sufis regard it as specific method of worship justified by this Quranic injunction, that remember God with constant recollection.⁴³ (3:41) The constant recalling creates ecstasy in Sufi. In the third century A.H the general basis of Sufi movement shifted from fear of God to the love of God. For the Sufis, Allah was the Real Being and the only method to find the Real Being is that a person by abandoning his self-consciousness absorbed oneself into Divine Oneness.⁴⁴ During the 4th and 5th century A.H (10th and 11th century A.D), Sufism raised in strength. It was the period when *Zikr* developed a more liturgical quality rather than being simple congregational Quranic recitation. Recitation of chants was emphasized. The popularity of this method of worship raised the hostility of Ulama towards Sufis because they thought that *Zikr* will take the place of mosque as center of religious life.⁴⁵ Gibb relates the spread of Islam to the fact that religion introduced a method of worship through Sufism which was more appealing for the common mass as opposed to the serious ritualism of tenet.⁴⁶ Till the 13th century A.D. this movement began to develop in organized Sufi Orders which spread throughout the world. These Orders are not the sects rather all the Orders are considered equally authentic and legitimate. The people belonged to different Sufi Orders pray in the same mosque and attend the religious and other ceremonies of other Orders too. Their

³⁶Farah Fatima GolparvaranShadchehr, "Abd Al-Rahman Jami: Naqshbandi Sufi, Persian Poet", Ph.D Thesis, (Graduate School Of The Ohio State University, 2008), P. 42

³⁷Khanam, "The Origin and Evolution of Sufism" P.

³⁸Hussnain, *The Practices of Sufis*, p. 2.

³⁹Khanam, "The origin and Evolution of Sufism" p.24.

⁴⁰Carl W. Ernst And Bruce B. Lawrence, *Sufi Martyrs of Love*, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), P. 41.

⁴¹Hamilton A.R Gibb, *Mohammedanism*, (New York: Mentor Books. 1958), P. 62

⁴²J. Spencer Trimmingham, *The Sufi Orders In Islam*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1973), p. 22.

⁴³ The Quran, Chapter No. 3 Verse No. 41.

⁴⁴Trimmingham, *The Sufi Orders In Islam*.p. 189.

⁴⁵ Gibb, *Mohammedanism*, p. 105

⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 53.

differences are only in the degree of their organization and in *Zikr* ritual.⁴⁷ *Zikr* was based on the principal formulas of Muslim faith *i.e* nullification (there is no God) and confirmation (but God) and the ninety nine Arabic names of Allah. Later generations of Sufi masters appended their own particular formulas of new blends of Divine names and unique replications that were deliberately maintained by their devotees. Each order developed particular psychophysical methods together with breath control.⁴⁸

***Zikr*: Significance for Sufis**

Sufis agree that the heart of faithful must be “perfumed with the remembrance of Allah.” because recollection is the spiritual food for mystic.⁴⁹ *Zikr* leads to the complete spiritualism. He who recalls Allah constantly is the real companion *Jalis* of Allah⁵⁰ as Allah promised in *Hadis-e-Qudsi* that ‘*Ana Jalisun Man Zakarni*’ “I am the companion of him who remembers Me”. Sufis lay stress on *Ihsan*. They firmly believe that true practice of *Ihsan* has several levels of excellence and the purpose of Sufi practice is to bring oneself to that level of excellence. According to them *Ihsan* is that level of excellence at which a person experiences to see God face to face. For them to be conscious of the fact that Allah is watching you is the lower level of devotion. When someone is conscious that lord is watching, he tries to avoid sins. This is the first level of piety. Some wish to see God face to face in their life and according to Sufis this is the second level of piety. Sufis desire to experience God face to face. Sufis say that the Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W) and his companions were totally absorbed in their prayers when pray and this complete absorption in prayers is the foundation of Sufism. They think that the higher level of excellence in praying that create ecstasy can only be attain through *Zikr*. True *Zikr* was observed by the Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W.) and his companions when they prayed intently and in remembrance of Allah, but in later generations, this custom faded. In order to reproduce the prior commitment and spirituality in prayers, Sufis attached more significance to *Zikr* than compulsory supplications. In order to make their worship excellent, to better their *Ihsan* and to see God face to face, they turned *Zikr* into an effective tool.⁵¹ Earlier in the period of the Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W)’s companions and the companions of the companions every additional prayer except obligatory prayers was considered as *Nafl*. In the early days of Islam, the term *Nafl* was commonly used in the general sense of good deed. Obligatory duties were called *Fraiz* and additional duties other than obligatory were called *Nafl*. The Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W) also offered *Nafl* supplications however term *Nafl* was explained by them generally as good activities (not just the prayers). Early Sufis did the same but the later Sufis restricted this term *Nafl* to the narrow sense of offering prayers. Sufis did the same with the word *Zikr* and the term *Zikr* was restricted to repeating the names of Allah and not every act.⁵² *Zikr* is the first step toward the love of Allah. When somebody falls in love with someone he repeats his name and constantly mention and remember him. So the heart of the person in whom the love of Allah is implanted will become the place of constant *Zikr*.⁵³ Sufi laid great emphasize on *Safa* which means purification. Quran says that he is indeed successful who keeps his *Nafs* purify and he is unsuccessful who corrupts it.⁵⁴ We learn from Quran that Allah has created man with perfect

⁴⁷Fernea, *Nubian Ceremonial Life*, p. 43

⁴⁸ Ernst Sufi *Martyrs of Love*, p. 41.

⁴⁹ Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, p. 168

⁵⁰RuzbihanBaqli. "Sharh-I Shathiyat," *Les Paradoxes DesSoufis*. Edited By Henri Corbin, (Tehran And Paris, 1966) P, 638, Paragraphs Cited.InSchimmel, *Mystical Dimensions Of Islam*, p. 168

⁵¹Khanam, "The Origin And Evolution Of Sufism" Pp.25-30

⁵²Ibid., p.31.

⁵³Abu Nuaym Al-Isfahani. *HilyatUl-Auliya*. 10 Vols. (Cairo, 1932), p. 44.

⁵⁴The Qur'an 91:9-10

soul and gave him the ability to distinguish between right and wrong⁵⁵but unfortunately man has corrupted his soul during his journey of life on earth. To bring it back to its purity, purification is needed. Allah likes this act. So purification is essential for the attainment of divine approval.⁵⁶ For the purification of *Nafs*, Sufis introduced many techniques, among them *Zikr* is the most important one.⁵⁷*Zikr* is the basic requirement on the path of *Tasawwuf*. According to Sufis, keeping Allah present in the heart all time is the essence of *Zikr* and abstain from everything that may cause forgetfulness of him. Sufis regard *Farz*, *Wajib*, *Sunnah* as major sources of remembrance of Allah. According to Qushayri, the important characteristic of *Zikr* is that it is not restricted to specific time.⁵⁸ So, *Zikr* is a broader concept that can transform any physical and non-physical act into a religious deed.⁵⁹When an adept finds problem on the path, “*Zikr* is the sword through which he threatens his enemies. Allah protects them who constantly remember Him in problems and dangers”.⁶⁰ So, *Zikr* got the center place in Sufi practice. It is performed under the guidance of a Sufi master and is also performed in gatherings and in seclusion. It can also be performed all the day silently while working. Sufis gave *Zikr* a formal and well-defined shape. They attached importance to its popular meaning rather than Quranic meanings and introduced several methods of remembering Allahi. *e* loudly, silently even with music and beating drums as means of attaining their goal.⁶¹

Types of *Zikr*

Zikr can be divided into two branches: *Zikr-e-Jali* (known as *Jahrtoo*) which is recited loudly and *Zikr-e-Khafi*, or *Qalbi Zikr* which is made either in low voice or with the tongue of heart.⁶² *Zikr-e-Khafi* is considered superior than *Zikr-e-Jali*.⁶³ Classical texts generally prefer remembrance in heart which is done in solitude.⁶⁴ Types of *Zikr* are matter of debate among Sufis. Both groups' spokespeople attempt to bolster their claims with Quranic and Hadis evidence. Several *Ahadis* are cited in favor of *Zikr-e-Jali*. Bukhari described that Ibn 'Abbas (R.A) reported, "In the period of the Prophet ((S.A.W)), the general population used to bring their voices up in *Zikr*."⁶⁵ Imam Ahmad, Abu Dawood and Jam-e-Tirmazi related that As-Sa'ib (R.A) reported that the Prophet ((S.A.W)) said, "Gabriel came to me and asked me to order my Companions to bring their voices up in *Takbir*."⁶⁶ It is described by Bukhari and Muslim and specified by Jalaluddin as-Suyuti, from different accumulations, that Ali bin Abi Talib (R.A) stated, "I asked the Prophet (S.A.W) one time, 'O Messenger of Allah, lead me to the shortest path to Allah's Presence, and the easiest approach to worship, and the most ideal way for Allah, Almighty and Exalted. The Prophet (S.A.W) replied, 'O 'Ali, constantly make *Zikrullah*, quietly and loudly.' I said, 'O Prophet (S.A.W), every single individual is making *Zikr*. Give me something extraordinary.' The Prophet (S.A.W) stated, 'O 'Ali, the best of what I, and all prophets before me, said is, *La Ilaha IllAllah*. If everything on all the heavens and earth were put on one side of the balance and *La Ilaha IllAllah* was put in the other, *La Ilaha IllAllah* would be heavier. Judgment Day will never come insofar as there are

⁵⁵The Qur'an 91:7-8

⁵⁶Khanam, "The Origin and Evolution of Sufism" p. 27.

⁵⁷Ibid., p. 29.

⁵⁸Abdul-Karim Qushayri, *Al-Risalah*, (Egypt, 1940), p. 368.

⁵⁹Tenik And Goktas, "Importance and Effects of Remembrance" p. 220.

⁶⁰Qushayri. *Ar-Risala Fi Ilm At-Tasawwuf*, p.37.

⁶¹ Ibid., p.26

⁶²Thomas Patrick Hughes."Zikr", Dictionary Of Islam, (New Delhi: MunshiramManoharlal Publishers Pvt. Ltd, 1885), P. 703

⁶³ Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, p. 171

⁶⁴L. Gardet, Dhikr, *Encyclopaedia of Islam*; vol. 2, New ed. (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1965), Pp. 223-227,

⁶⁵ Sahih Bukhari,

⁶⁶Abu Daud and Jam-e-Tirmazi,

individuals on this earth saying *La Ilaha IllAllah.*' Then I asked, 'In what capacity should I recite.' The Prophet (S.A.W) replied, 'Close your eyes and hear me out presenting *La Ilaha IllAllah* three times. At that point you say it three times and I will hear you out.' Then the Prophet (S.A.W) said it and I rehearsed it in a loud voice."⁶⁷ The practitioners of *Zikr-e-Khafi* also traced the origin of their practice from Quran and *Ahadis*. Allah says in Quran "and recall thy Lord in thy self with lowliness and in fear, and without loudness of discourse, in the mornings and nighttimes; and do not be of the negligent." (7:205)⁶⁸ Bayhaqi describes with reference to Hazrat Aysha (R.A): "The *Zikr* that is not heard by the Recording Angels rises to seventy times the one they listen it."⁶⁹ According to Shibli "True *Zikris* that you forget your *Zikr*."⁷⁰ It is also considered that among the ten parts of worshipping, nine are silence."⁷¹ The Quranic exegeses do not tell us that how to remember Allah but for the Sufis they are most important. There are several stages of *Zikr* which leads to total annihilation. Generally, there are four stages are defined: recollection with tongue, recollection with heart and recollection with spirit and recollection with sir. At the last stage one attains total annihilation.⁷² In later Sufi texts seven stages of spiritual development are described by Sufisi.e *Zikr Lasani*, *Zikr Nafs*, *Zikr Qalb*, *Zikr Ruh*, *Zikr Sir*, *Zikr Khafi* and *Zikr Akhfa Alkhafi*.⁷³

Sufi Orders and Practice of *Zikr*

The practitioners of *Zikr-e-Khafi* trace the origin of their practice from Hazrat Abu Bakr R.A. and associated this practice to him when he was in the cave with the Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W) enroute his migration from Makkah to Madina. Hazrat Abu Bakr (R.A) was taught silent *Zikr* by the Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W).⁷⁴ Sufis refers this practice to the Quranic Verse "then God sent down His peace (*sakinatho*) upon him." (The Quran 9:40) Here word "peace" has been appraised as a silent *Zikr*.⁷⁵ Likewise the followers of *Zikr-e-Jali* follow the ways of Hazrat Ali (R.A) as the *Zikr* was recited by him. It is believed by making reference to the *Hadis* quoted above that Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W) entrusted him the loud *Zikr*. The Naqshbandi Sufis usually focus on *Zikr-e-Khafi* silent *Zikr* by referring to this Quranic injunction "call your lord silently".⁷⁶ Abdul Khaliq Ghujdwani (d. 1220) one of the notable leader of the order formulated a set of eight principles known as *Kalamat E Qudsia*.⁷⁷ *Qadri* and *Suharwardi* Sufis made loud *Zikr*. The devotees of *Qadri*

⁶⁷Sahi Bukhari,

⁶⁸ The Quran, Chapter 7, Verse, 205

⁶⁹ Sheikh Amin Al-Kurdi, *Tanwir Al-Qulub* Tanwir Al-Qulub Fi Mu'amalat 'Allam Al-Ghuyub, *The Enlightenment of Hearts* (Surabaya: Shirkah Bungkul Indah, 1980), P. 522.

⁷⁰ Abu Nasr As-Sarraj. *Kitab Al-Luma Fit-Tasawwuf*. Edited By Reynold A. Nicholson. (Leiden And London, 1914), P. 220

⁷¹ Braune, "*Futuh Al-Gaib*," P. 98.

⁷² Geels, "A Note on the Psychology of *Dhikr*," Pp. 56.

⁷³ *Zikr Al-Lisan*, with the tongue; *Zikr An-Nafs*, which is not audible but consists of inner movement and feeling; *Zikr Al-Qalb*, with the heart, when the heart contemplates God's beauty and majesty in its inner recesses; *Zikr Ar-Ruh*, when the meditating mystic perceives the lights of the attributes; *Zikr As-Sirr*, in the innermost heart, when divine mysteries are revealed; *Zikr Al-Khafi*, the secret recollection, which means the vision of the light of the beauty of essential unity; and, finally, the *Zikr Akhfa Al-Khafi*, the most secret of secret, which is the vision of the Reality of Absolute Truth (*haqq al-yaqri*, (source: Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, p. 174)

⁷⁴ Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, p. 169

⁷⁵ Farah Fatima Golparvaran Shadchehr, "Abd Al-Rahman Jami", P. 42

⁷⁶ The Quran, chapter no. 07 Al Araf, *verse no*, 55,

⁷⁷ DeWeese, "Khojagani Origin and the Critique of Sufism", p. 507. Also Kashifi, *Rashahat*, p. 38. These principles are: *hush dar dam*-awareness in breathing, *nazardarqadam*-watching over one's steps, *safar darwatan*- internal mystical journey, *khalwatdaranjuman*-solitude in the crowd, *yad kard*-recollection, meaning *dhikr* from heart and tongue, *bazgasht*- meaning every time a Sufi in his heart says a *dhikr*, then

way raise their voices as much as they can hear themselves, round *Zikr* is presented if at least three supporters come together. The essence of the *Qadri* Order is the *Zikr* of the word “Allah” and *Zikr* of oneness of Allah “*La Ilahellalla*”⁷⁸ When a person initiates to *Chishti* order, he is granted a formula of *Zikr* by his mentor. He memorizes it by repeating it three times. This tradition refers to the tradition of initiation of Hazrat Ali (R.A) by the Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W). The basic elements of *Chishti Zikr* include the recitation of the name word ‘Allah’, *La ilaheillAllah* (“there is no God but Allah”), the Arabic ninety-nine Divine names with breath control methods and infrequent perceptions of letters, words, or muddled visions.⁷⁹ With the passage of time Different devotional techniques, styles and traditions developed by the Sufis according to the perspectives suited to different masters and cultural wisdom of the Orders.

Conclusion

Zikr being a Sufi ritual is not an innovation in Islam rather originated from Quran and Sunnah. Several Quranic exhortations and *Ahadis* are quoted in favor of it which proves its importance in worship. The essence of *Zikr* is to remember Allah all the time in all the sphere of life. By constant remembering Allah one can purify his soul and thus attains divine approval. Realizing the virtues of *Zikr* it was performed by the Prophet of Islam and his companions too. They remembered Allah all the time and perform worship in full devotion and concentration. They performed prayers with the higher level of devotion but in later period this practice with higher level devotion became pale and thus as a reaction Sufism emerged in 2nd century A.H (7th century A.D). Sufism followed *Ihsan* which is one of the three elements of Islam. The core objective and essence of Sufism was to get the earlier higher level of devotion in worship and experience God face to face. For Sufis, the only way to achieve that level was the practice of *Zikr* through which purification of soul can be attained and one can experience God face to face. So, they focus on *Zikr* and adopted *Zikr* as core ritual to get closeness to Allah. With the emergence of Sufi orders in 11th and 12th century A.D *Zikr* was adopted as a specific method of worship. Different Sufi Orders follows different techniques of *Zikr*. Mainly *Zikr* was divided into two types *Zikr-e-Jali* associated to Hazrat Abu Bakr (R.A) and *Zikr-e-Khafi* associated to Hazrat Ali (R.A). All the Orders practice *Zikr-e-Jali* except *Naqshbandi* order that follow *Zikr-e-Khafi*. Several stages of *Zikr* are also described by Sufis which takes the aspirant to total annihilation. With the passage of time different methods and techniques were formed and added to early practice of *Zikr* by the Sufi masters including *Muraqba* and breath control techniques in order to concentrate on remembrance of Allah and to avoid forgetfulness.

he must also say to God that he means Him, in another word restraining one’s thoughts, *nigahdasht* watching one’s thought, according to Sa’d al-Din, another of Khwajagan, Jami’s mentor, a Sufi for one or two hours concentrates on thinking about God, and *yad dasht*- concentration upon God.

⁷⁸Unknown, *Method And Manners In The Qadiri Sufi Path*, (Biefield Germany: Geylânî Islamic Cultural Center, 2006), P.

⁷⁹Ernst, *Sufi Martyrs of Love*, P. 45