

Deplorable State of the Muslim Ummah Is There a Cure?

The deplorable situation of Muslims and Islam in Muslim countries is not breaking news. Muslim world was under colonialism by non-Muslim powers until a few decades ago. Since the departure of colonizing powers and division of land into nation-states, the Muslim world has been in constant turmoil. It's like a person waking up after a long sleep and attempting to walk—yet not fully conscious to know where he is going.

From monarchy, dictatorship, communism to democracy—everything seems to have failed to help Muslim Nations stand on their own feet with dignity. It's easy to criticize government and rulers for the failure of a nation but Prophet Muhammad SAW has told us that the way we are, is the way our rulers are going to be. If Muslims are corrupt, their rulers are going to be corrupt; if they are scrupulous, their rulers will be likewise. So, the real issue is the spiritual well-being of individual Muslims. Each person is like a brick and bricks cemented together create a building. If bricks are weak and hollow, no matter how beautiful the exterior of the building, it will deteriorate.

So what is the solution to many ills facing the Muslim world? Believe it or not, the answer is very simple. Allah SWT is the owner of all cures and he is the only one who is aware of our hidden and apparent ills and weaknesses. I strongly believe that if we work on only one topic the rest of our affairs will automatically fall in place, and that is the strengthening of our relationship with Allah SWT.

Once we have attained true *Iman* when all our actions, efforts and desires are for the sake of Allah and His religion, then we can expect victory from Allah SWT. How do we know we have attained that status? Through a deep—individual and collective—internal reflection and self examination while using the words of Allah and His Prophet SAW as a source of guidance. Allah SWT says:

إِنَّمَا الْمُؤْمِنُونَ الَّذِينَ إِذَا ذُكِرَ اللَّهُ وَجِلَتْ قُلُوبُهُمْ وَإِذَا تُلِيَتْ عَلَيْهِمْ
آيَاتُهُ زَادَتْهُمْ إِيمَانًا وَعَلَىٰ رَبِّهِمْ يَتَوَكَّلُونَ ﴿٢﴾

The believers are only those who, when Allah is mentioned, their hearts become fearful, and when His verses are recited to them, it increases them in faith; and upon their Lord they rely.
(8:2)

Rasul Allah SAW once delivered a sermon and gave following advice:

Seek forgiveness of Allah before death overtakes you; hurry towards good deeds before you become busy; and join the relationship between yourself and Allah with the maximum of dhikr (remembrance of Allah) and charity—both seen and unseen. Allah will increase your provision, grant you victory, and He will take care of all your affairs.

Dhikr and charity are the two forms of worship that have no boundary in Islam and they maximize the gifts from Allah SWT. The more one increases his Dhikr and charity, the more Allah SWT will grant him abundance, fulfill his wishes, and facilitate his life affairs.

إِنَّ الْمُسْلِمِينَ وَالْمُسْلِمَاتِ وَالْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَالْمُؤْمِنَاتِ وَالْقَانِتِينَ وَالْقَانِتَاتِ
وَالصَّادِقِينَ وَالصَّادِقَاتِ وَالصَّابِرِينَ وَالصَّابِرَاتِ وَالْخَاشِعِينَ
وَالْخَاشِعَاتِ وَالْمُتَصَدِّقِينَ وَالْمُتَصَدِّقَاتِ وَالصَّابِغِينَ وَالصَّابِغَاتِ
وَالْحَافِظِينَ فُرُوجَهُمْ وَالْحَافِظَاتِ وَالذَّاكِرِينَ اللَّهَ كَثِيرًا وَالذَّاكِرَاتِ
أَعَدَّ اللَّهُ لَهُمْ مَغْفِرَةً وَأَجْرًا عَظِيمًا ﴿٣٥﴾

Indeed, the Muslim men and Muslim women, the believing men and believing women, the obedient men and obedient women, the truthful men and truthful women, the patient men and patient women, the humble men and humble women, the charitable men and charitable women, the fasting men and fasting women, the men who guard their private parts and the women who do so, and the men who remember Allah often and the women who do so - for them Allah has prepared forgiveness and a great reward. (33:35)

Remembrance of Allah is constantly tied with rewards which are not only reserved for the hereafter but bestowed on the *dhakir* (the one who remembers Allah) in this world as well. Allah SWT, the Omnipotent Master of the heavens and the earth encourages us to remember Him in these words in Surah Baqarah:

فَاذْكُرُونِي أَذْكَرْكُمْ وَأَشْكُرُوا إِلَيَّ وَلَا تَكْفُرُونِ ﴿١٥٢﴾

So remember Me; I will remember you. And be grateful to Me and do not deny Me. (2:152)

What more motivation does a true Muslim and a *Mo'min* (believer) need than that he is being remembered by His Lord, the Supreme?

***Dhikr* is a Fortress**

Why is Allah SWT insisting on us remembering Him repeatedly and encouraging us by attaching incentives to his remembrance? That is because He SWT knows that we as humans are weak and easily beguiled by the accursed *Shaytaan* (Satan) who is always after us. He wants us to protect ourselves in this fortress of *dhikr* which can then protect us from the tricks of *Shaytaan*. The more one engages in *dhikr*, the stronger the fortress becomes making it harder for the person to fall prey to *Shaytaan* and his own *nafs* (carnal desires).

A sage once advised sincere people who want to attain high spiritual status of the following:

1. To busy your tongue and heart with the remembrance of Allah.
2. To hold tight your heart to Allah (check your actions all the time)
3. Do the opposite of what your *nafs* (carnal desire) wants.
4. Purify the *niyyah* (intention) all the time.

Constant remembrance of Allah, being vigilant of one's actions and intentions, not giving into one's *nafs* all the time, and purifying intentions for all actions and performing them for the sake of Allah keeps the person on the path of righteousness or *Sirat-al-Mustaqeem*.

One of the most famous scholars Ibn Qayyim Al-Jawziyya wrote a book called *Al Wabil As Sayyib Min al Kalim At Tayyib* translated in English as *Invocation of God*. This treatise deals with only one topic which is the Remembrance of Allah. In the book the scholar goes on to mention 120 benefits of *dhikr*. Here, we will relate a few for the benefit of our readers and highly encourage you to invest in the book and make it your life's companion.

The Benefits of Remembrance of Allah:

1. It pleases Allah SWT.
2. It destroys *Shaytaan's* influence over the person.
3. Erases worry and anxiety from the heart.
4. Generates ease and contentment in the heart.
5. Increases the strength of the heart and body.
6. It brings light to the face and heart.
7. It increases provision from Allah.
8. It generates respect for the person in hearts of others.
9. It generates love between the person and Allah.
10. It develops the level of *muraqaba* (awareness of Allah) which eventually leads one to the level of *Ihsaan* or excellence¹.
11. It brings the yearning and desire to get closer to Allah and to abandon this world.

¹ Read the article titled "What is Your Identity?" for further understanding of the topic.

12. It makes the person get closer to Allah.
13. It opens a hidden door of knowledge between the slave and his Lord SWT.
14. It generates vigilance of Allah inside the person which helps him monitor his behavior.
15. Makes the heart alive and soft.
16. Decreases sins.
17. A *dhakir* (the one who remembers) is always in the company of Allah and is never lonely.
18. When one is in the habit of constant *dhikr* during ease, Allah remembers him during the time of calamity and difficulty.
19. Saves one from the torture.
20. Brings tranquility and mercy as the person is surrounded by angels.
21. Protects the person from backbiting and gossiping.
22. Generates a company of angels for the person.
23. Saves the person from sorrow on the Day of Judgment.
24. *Dhikr* accompanied with tears will guarantee the shade of the throne of Allah on the Day of Judgment when there will be no other shade.
25. Increases the bounty of Allah over the person and allows him to perform more good deeds.
26. Allah will fulfill the wishes of the person.
27. *Dhikr* is the easiest form of worship that brings great rewards.
28. It is the roots in *jannah*; every time one does *dhikr*, he is planting his own garden in *jannah*.
29. It is the pillar of all the goodness.
30. It is the protection from forgetting Allah and from the company of *Shayateen*.
31. It will be your light in this world, in the grave, and the light that will help you cross over *Sirat*.²
32. It protects the heart from heedlessness.
33. It is the tree of all the knowledge.

² It is a bridge thinner than hair that will be stretched over the pit of fire on the Day of Judgment and everyone will be required to cross over it; some will make it to heaven depending on their deeds and the light provided to them based on their actions in this world, while the other will fall into fire.

34. Its reward is equal to the emancipation of slaves in the path of Allah.
35. Its merit is higher than that of spending money or donating horses in the way of Allah.
36. It is equal to and even higher than struggling in the path of Allah.
37. Remembrance of Allah is the highest state of thanks to Allah.
38. It is the cure of the diseases of the heart.
39. It is the pinnacle of relationship with the Lord.
40. It is the way of quickening the blessings of Allah towards you; and of diverting His anger from you.
41. *Salah 'Alan Nabi* (sending blessings over the prophet SAW) causes one to receive blessings of Allah on one's self and it will be heaviest on the scale of good deeds.
42. Remembrance of Allah causes sorrows and difficulties to become easy and generates goodness around the person.
43. It protects the heart from fear of anyone other than Allah.
44. It will be a veil between the person and fire.
45. It is purification from hypocrisy.
46. It whitens and lightens the face in this life, at the time of death, in the grave, and the hereafter; meaning it beautifies the person.
47. Rasul Allah SAW referred to the person who remembers Allah as alive and those who do not remember Him as dead.
48. Rasul Allah SAW advised a companion saying: Immigrate from sins as it is the best immigration; hold on to the obligations as it is the best jihad; remember Allah in abundance as you cannot meet Him on the day of judgment with something better than His remembrance in this world.

The beginning of the journey of faith is silence and constant state of *dhikr* which will not only bring wisdom but light and internal vision (*baseerah*) from Allah SWT.

Kinds of *Dhikr*

There are many different kinds of *dhikr* one can perform:

- ❖ *Halaqaat* (gatherings) where the knowledge of Allah is dispersed are a form of *dhikr*.
- ❖ Recitation of Quran is *dhikr*.
- ❖ Chanting *tasbeeh* (*Subhan Allah*), *tahmeed* (*Alhamdulillah*), and *Takbir* (*Allah-u-Akbar*) is *dhikr*.
- ❖ *Dhikr* of the angels is to say *Subhan Allah wabi hamdi hee Subhan Allah al Azeem* (Glory to Allah and Praise is to Him, Glory to Allah the Greatest.)
- ❖ The most beloved *dhikr* to Allah is the following:

La ilaha illAllahu Wahdahu La Shareeka lahu, la hulmuluk, wa la hulhamd, yuhyee wa yumeet, wa huwa hayy la yumoot abadan abada Dhul Jalaali waal Ikram beyadihi alkhayr, wa huwa 'ala kulli Shay'in Qadeer.

(There is) none worthy of worship except Allah. He is only One. (There is) no partners for Him. For Him (is) the Kingdom. And for Him (is) the Praise. He gives life and causes death. And He (is) Alive. He will not die, never, ever. Possessor of Majesty and Reverence. In His hand (is) the goodness. And He (is) the goodness. And He (is) on everything powerful.)

- ❖ Allah SWT said in the Qur'an:

وَلِلَّهِ الْأَسْمَاءُ الْحُسْنَىٰ فَادْعُوهُ بِهَا ۗ

And to Allah belong the best names, so invoke Him by them. (7:180)

Allah SWT has many attributes mentioned in the Qur'an as well as in the sayings of the Prophet SAW. He SWT is known as The Merciful, The All-Powerful, The Wise, The Provider. Whatever a person is dealing with in life, there is an attribute of Allah associated with it. All a person needs to do to ask for Allah's assistance or to achieve a certain quality is to call on Allah with that particular attribute. So an excellent form of *dhikr* is to call on Allah by His most beautiful names.

May Allah SWT give us sincerity to be true seekers of knowledge and to obtain high spiritual status. May He SWT choose us to be among those who revive the true teachings of

this religion which has the potential to cure all social, personal, spiritual diseases of this world. *Ameen.*