

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ



Is Congregational *Dhikr* a *Bid'a*?

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There are many challenges facing the Muslim Ummah today both internally and externally. The external challenges are many and plain for the eye to see, while the internal challenges are a bit more insidious and sinister, but also serve the aims and objectives of both the overt and covert enemies of *Al-Islam*. In particular, what is most distressing for many Muslims is trying to establish certainty in that one's practice and understanding of the religion is one that is rooted in the long-standing and unbroken tradition. This leads in many cases to the avoidance of any suspect or unfamiliar practices, ideologies, and slogans that might actually bring one's faith to the brink of perdition and destruction. Some accuse others of practicing innovation (*bid'a*) in the religion upon hearing a statement or witnessing a practice that one has never seen before, in spite of the fact that the greater majority of Muslims are still ill-educated, mis-educated, or not fully acquainted with many of the broad Islamic teachings. Reservation about *apparently* novel practices is the most natural of reactions for any Muslim seeking to ensure that he/she is not in violation of the Messenger's commandments or his normative and prescribed way of acting. However, ignorance or faulty understandings should never be granted the authority of a religious verdict, especially when that verdict leads to accusations of sin launched against fellow believers.

Properly Understanding *Bid'a*

A good believer always tries to avail himself by becoming fully acquainted with both the label he is designating to an act as well as a complete understanding of the act he is designating the label of innovation to. As discussed in my article "The Absolute Truth About Sunnah and *Bid'a*," it was established that *bid'a* in the view of the overwhelming majority of scholars is subject to the five legal rulings of Islam: compulsory (*wajiba*), forbidden (*muharrama*), disliked (*makruha*), recommended (*manduba*), and neutral (*mubaha*). On this basis and other things, it was established that *bid'a* divides into two broad categories: good (*hasana*) and bad (*sayi'a*), or praiseworthy (*mahmuda*) and blameworthy (*madhmuma*). As in the words of Imam Shafi'i, "Innovation is two types (*al-bid'atu bid'atan*): approved innovation (*bid'a mahmuda*) and disapproved innovation (*bid'a madhmuma*). Whatever conforms to the Sunna is approved (*mahmud*) and whatever opposes it is abominable (*madhmum*)." For the Prophet ﷺ said, "Whoever introduces into this affair of ours what is not from it, it is rejected." And since things that are in conformity with the aims and objectives of the Shariah are "from it," they are not to be declared as being blameworthy innovations (*bida'*) even if they have no established precedent from the early period of the Salaf. At least, this is how it was understood by the majority.

Imam al-Shatibi (d. 790 a.h.), a scholar of Islamic Spain (Andalusia), on the other hand, declares in his book, *al-Itisam*, that there is no such thing as a good innovation (*bid'a*). Imam al-Shatibi is pivotal in modern-day Salafi arguments and their insistence on there being only one form of *bid'a*: blameworthy. But as my argument clarified, the difference between Imam al-Shatibi's argument and that of the majority was only a matter of semantics, since al-Shatibi deems anything originating from one of the primary or secondary sources accepted by any of the Four Imams to be in conformity with the Sunnah. Hence, it should not be called a '*bid'a*' (innovation), while the majority classified anything happening anew outside of the early period of the Salaf as either a good or bad innovation (*bid'a*).

The Meaning of *Dhikr*

The word, 'dhikr,' is an Arabic word that originates from the trilateral verb, 'dha-ka-ra,' which means 'to recall, to remind, or to make mention of something.' In its original usage it is synonymous with the Arabic word '*sharaf*' (nobility), as in Allah's saying, "...And We have elevated for you your mention (dhikr)" [94: 4]. It translates as 'mention, remembrance, or reminder.' And it is sometimes used as a reference and designation to the Qur'an, as in Allah's saying, "And ask the People of the Reminder if you know not" [16: 43; 21: 7] And as in His saying, "And We have revealed to you the Reminder that you'd clarify to people what has been revealed to them" [16: 44].

At any rate, the three basic meanings of the word 'dhikr' imply [1] the pronouncement of something on the tongue, [2] calling something to mind that one has forgotten or become heedless of, and [3] reminding another of something. For this reason, Ibn Taymiya said,

"So when someone asking a question means [for us] to specify the thing that the name is being given to, we make reference to it with any name that that thing given that [particular] name is known by. The name might be a proper name ('alam),¹ or it might be a description (sifa),² as in the case of one who asks about His saying, "And whoever turns away from my *dhikr*..." [20: 124]. [The questioner might ask] What is His '*dhikr*?' It is said to him, "It is the Qur'an," for example, or "It is what He has revealed of Books." For verily '*dhikr*' is a '*masdar*' (infinitive). And the '*masdar*' at times is ascribed to the active participle³, and at times it is

ascribed to the passive participle⁴. So when it is said, 'The *dhikr* of Allah' according to the second meaning, it is a reference to 'mention made of Him,' like the servant's saying, "*Subhan Allah! Wal-Hamdu lillah! Wa La ilaha illa Allah! Wa Allahu Akbar!*" But when it is stated according to the first meaning, it refers to 'what He makes mention of.' And it is His word (kalam)..."⁵

Quotes from Scripture

The Qur'an says, "There is a beautiful example for you in Allah's Messenger for whomever hopes in Allah and The Last Day, and remembers Allah much" [33: 21]. Due to the homonymous nature of the word '*dhikr*,' this verse could also be translated as, "...and make mention of Allah much." The first translation implies that '*dhikr*' is no more than remembering in one's heart and mind who and what Allah is, while the second translation implies that one actually transfers what comes to mind to the tongue in the form of words.

This same probability is found in all of the following statements,

"...Those who do *dhikr* of Allah standing, sitting, and while on their sides..." [Koran 3: 191]

"The world is cursed; cursed is all that is in it except for the *dhikr* of Allah, and a learned person and one learning..."⁶

"Whoever the Qu'ran and the *dhikr* of Me busies him from asking Me, I'll give him the best of what I give those who ask."⁷

In each of these cases, the '*dhikr*' of Allah may be construed as meaning either 'remembering Allah' or 'making mention of Allah with the tongue.' But this is not the case in the following

¹ Like the name 'Mary.'

² Like the names, 'Hope,' 'Faith,' 'Integrity,' or 'Felicity.'

³ In this case, it would translate as meaning "And whoever turns away from making mention of Me..."

⁴ In this case it would translate as, "And whoever turns away from what I make mention of..."

⁵ *Ibn Taymiyya, Ahmad*. Majmu'at al-Fatawa, Dar al-Jil, 1418/1998, 13/179

⁶ *Ibn Majah*, Kitab Al-Zuhd: 2, and *Tirmidhi*, Kitab Al-Zuhd: 14

⁷ *Tirmidhi*, Thawab al-Qur'an: 25

quote from the divine hadith, which quotes Allah as saying,

“If he does *dhikr* of Me in an assembly, I’ll do *dhikr* of him in an assembly better than it.”⁸ Meaning, “If he mentions Me..., I’ll mention him...” It must be translated this way, because nothing else would be sensible.⁹ But in the other cases, one particular translation cannot be declared unequivocally to be correct, except that it would be preferred to translate *dhikr* under all circumstances as ‘mention with the tongue,’ since a person only mentions something after he remembers and recalls what he wants to mention. And such a translation would encompass all of the meanings of the word at once.

Imam Malik and the Practice of Medina

Imam Malik was a very devout Imam and unanimously accepted by Muslims as being a true champion of the Sunnah. No one can question Imam Malik’s tenacity and fervor for following the Sunnah, especially since much of his madhhab is rooted in the views and practices of the two Companions known to be most strict in their adherence to the Sunnah: ‘Umar b. al-Khattab and his son, ‘Abd Allah b. ‘Umar. Imam Malik actually was a pupil of Nafi’, the freed-slave of ‘Abd Allah b. ‘Umar. And via this chain, Imam al-Bukhari established what he called ‘The Golden Chain’ that he considered to be the most authentic chain of transmission: Malik from Nafi’ from Ibn ‘Umar from the Messenger of Allah ﷺ.

Malik’s fervor about the Sunnah not only led him to consider the agreed upon actions of the scholars of Medina during his time as being more authoritative and producing more certainty than even certain sahih hadiths. It

⁸ Bukhari, Kitab al-Tawhid, Chapter 15

⁹ In other words, to translate the hadith as meaning “If he remembers me in an assembly, I will remember him in an assembly better than it...” would not make much sense, because the words “in an assembly” is a qualifier that makes it clear that the intent is to ‘mention..’ What sense is there in saying “in an assembly” if all the person has to do is “remember or recall?” And there is no such thing as ‘congregational remembering’ in the sense that a group of people sitting in one place happen to recall something they forgot at the same time. So, it is clear that the intent is that a person is rewarded for making mention of Allah in a public gathering.

also led him to avoid a number of matters that he suspected as being innovated practices in Islam, since they were uncommon in Medina.¹⁰ Among the things Imam Malik disliked and suspected as being innovations were: [1] group recitation of the Qur’an¹¹, [2] initiating a second congregational prayer in a mosque with a regular designated Imam¹², [3] raising the hands

¹⁰ Al-Shatibi states in *Al-‘Itisam* [Dar Ibn ‘Affan 1418/1997 edition, 1/449],

“And Malik used to disapprove of every innovation (bid’a) even if it was regarding something good. And [he did] all of that as a means to prevent something that isn’t a Sunnah from being taken as a Sunnah, or [to keep] something that is not known from being taken as something that has been legislated. And Malik used to disapprove of visiting the holy places of Jerusalem [Bayt al-Maqdis] out of fear that it would be taken as a Sunnah. And he disapproved of visiting the graves of the martyrs, and he disapproved of visiting [masjid] Quba out of fear of that [being taken as a Sunnah], in spite of the encouragement of doing such things that has come in the [different] reports. But, when the scholars feared the consequence of that, they abandoned it.”

¹¹ Imam Nawawi said in *Sharh Sahih Muslim* while commenting on the Prophet’s ﷺ statement, “No people gather in one of the houses of Allah reciting the Book of Allah and studying it with one another except that mercy covers them...”

“And in this there is evidence for the virtue of gathering on the recitation of the Qur’an in the masjid. And it is our view and the view of the overwhelming majority. But Malik said: “It is disliked.” [9/19]

¹² Ibn Qasim, ‘Abd Al-Rahman. *Al-Mudawwana al-Kubra*, Beirut: Dar al-Fikr: 1419/1998, 1/122-123. It is also worthy of note here that Salafis at one time considered it haram (forbidden) for a group of Muslims to repeat a congregational prayer in the masjid, using as proof that the Salaf didn’t do it. Later they changed their view to make it conform with the position of Imam Ahmad based on the hadith that grades congregational prayer as being superior to prayer by one’s self. This is important because it shows an inconsistent methodological approach, since they sometimes use as proof that something shouldn’t be done the fact that the Salaf didn’t do it,

during supplication,¹³ [4] any form of group supplication or [5] group *dhikr*.¹⁴ Furthermore,

and other times they use a hadith to permit or forbid something, even though they claim to place nothing before the sahih narrations.

This is also important here, because they will condemn Sufis and their likes for doing things not reported from the Salaf, and refuse to accept their citations of general verses from the Qur'an or Hadith in support of their positions. But when Salafis are found doing something that hasn't been reported from the Salaf, like praying multiply congregational prayers in one mosque that has a regular Imam, they take refuge to general verses and hadiths as the Sufis and others do. And everyone is supposed to accept this, even though it is a double standard.

¹³ The reference for this will be mentioned later. The Salafis have also gone back and forth about the innovated nature of raising the hands in supplication. At one time they said that it was an innovation and impermissible, since the Salaf didn't do it. Later, when some of them made mention of the hadiths related to the topic, many of them changed and said that it was not an innovation and hence permitted, but that a person had to raise his hands so high that his armpits can be seen. And now today, there remain a great many—if not majority—of Salafis who still refuse to raise their hands during supplication, and claim that it is an innovation, in spite of the existence of numerous sound reports of the Prophet ﷺ doing this. This shows that such Salafis are insincere in their claims to place nothing before the authentic reports.

¹⁴ Have a look at *Al-Itisam* 1/452-465 where Al-Shatibi deals with the matter of group *dhikr* and *du'a*. On page 458 he mentions the following about the great Maliki, Ibn Battal in condemnation of the practice of group *du'a* led by the Imam after Salat while having the followers say 'Amin' after each individual request,

“And Ibn Battal related the condemnation of that and the harsh criticism of it against those who do that from the scholars of the Salaf in a manner that is sufficient.”

Then Al-Shatibi says,

“This is what the Shaykh related—after he declared supplication (*du'a*) after Salat in congregation on a regular basis—as being a deplorable innovation...”

And on the following page, he says,

“...Rather, the Imams still object to them. And Tartushi related in that regard about Malik things that serve

Malik's partialness toward Medinite customs led him as well as many other scholars of Medina to even reject the authenticity of hadiths that did not originate from Medina¹⁵.

Here, it is important to mention that Imam al-Shatibi in his attempts to be sincere in following his Imam (Malik), adopted the same views about the aforementioned matters. Hence, he declared them all to be innovations in his book, *al-Itisam*, a declaration that led to a major contradiction to his accepted definition of *bid'a* as being in short, 'Anything that doesn't originate from the primary or secondary sources established by the Four Imams' or 'Anything that doesn't have a valid legal basis.'¹⁶

the issue. So Malik's condemnation of it happened during his time, as did Tartushi's condemnation in his time. And his companions followed this. Then Al-Qarafi considered that among the disliked innovations (*bid'a makruha*) according to the madhhab of Malik. And it was accepted. And the people of his time raised no objection to him—to the extent of my knowledge—in spite of his claim that there are innovations that are good.”

¹⁵ Ibn Wahb reports that Imam Malik said,

“Whatever the people relate that is the same as what we relate, then we and they are equal in it. And whatever we relate exclusively, then we are more knowing of it than they are.” [Al-Mudawwana Al-Kubra, Kitab al-Manaqib: 2/546]

It is also reported that Shaykh Rabi'a said,

“Malik said to a man from the people of Kufa: “The first of us did not take from the first of you. Likewise, the last of us will not take from the last of you.”

Ibn Shihab Al-Zuhri said,

“The hadith comes from our midst (Medina) a hand span. Then it returns to Iraq an arm span.” [Ibid. p. 549]

¹⁶ Al-Shatibi translates *Bid'a* as,

“An approach in the religion (*din*) that is invented that resembles the approach that has been legislated. The thing intended by it is the same

In spite of this, we find that all of the things mentioned above do have a valid legal basis either from the Qur'an or Sunnah.

For instance, [1] the following hadith is support for the permissibility or favorableness of reciting Qur'an in a group,

“No people come together in any one of the houses of Allah reciting the book of Allah and studying it with one another, except that mercy covers them...”¹⁷

And the fact that they ‘come together’ while ‘reciting the book of Allah’ is proof enough to validate this practice in spite of the fact that it didn't exist during the time of the Salaf. Due to this, most of the Maliki of the country of Morocco have chosen not to stick to the position of their Imam. So anyone who visits the country will find that practically every mosque has a tradition of reciting the Qur'an in congregation after the dawn and sunset prayers

thing intended by the approach that has been legislated.” [p. 51]

Then on page 52 he says when speaking about the science of Kalam and considering it among the matters that are not innovations,

“And the same applies to the Foundations of the *Din* (Usul al-Din)—that is, *‘ilm al-Kalam*.’ The summary of it is no more than an affirmation of the proofs of the Qur'an, the Sunnah, what originates from it with respect to *Tawhid*, and what is connected with it, just as Fiqh is an affirmation of its proofs in the branches of worship. So if it is said: “Then its publication in that manner is innovated (*mukhtar'a*), then the answer would be that it has a basis (*asl*) in scripture...”

And this statement that “...it has a basis in scripture,” leads to a contradiction in Al-Shatibi's judgments, since it means that as long as something has a valid legal basis from Qur'an, Sunnah, *Ijma'*, *Qiyas*, *Istihsan*, *Masalih Mursala*, *Shar' man Qablana*, *Qawl or Fi'l Al-Sahaba*, etc., then it is not a *bid'a* even if it didn't exist in the period of the Salaf. So when he considers congregational *dhikr* and *du'a* to be a *bida'*, it shows inconsistency in his understanding and definition.

¹⁷ Reported in Sahih Muslim.

(Subh and Maghrib), as well as after the afternoon prayer ('Asr) in some places.¹⁸

As for praying a second congregation in a mosque that houses a regular Imam, Imam Malik, Shafi'i, and Abu Hanifa all considered this to be disliked. Imam Malik's view was substantiated mainly by the fact that this was not a practice in Medina. But in spite of all of this, Imam Ahmad b. Hanbal and Ibn Hazm Al-Zahiri¹⁹ considered such a thing to be favorable

¹⁸ Maliki who may be stricter about adherence to the standard views found in the Maliki School might find problem with this position. And some, who don't seem to give much consideration to the circumstantial change of the rulings of fiqh and cling merely to what is found in the books, have accused the Moroccan scholars of not being true Maliki for this and for not praying with their hands at their sides. However, if we take into account the fact that one of the principles of the Maliki School is the principle of '*al-masalih al-mursala*' (Unspecified Interests), which is a rule that justifies new or unpopular occurrences due to the change of circumstances, the Moroccans can be cleared of any guilt, since the recitation of the Qur'an in congregation has a number of benefits. And those benefits that are produced by it remove certain harms that result from not utilizing the House of Allah for its intended purposes. For instance:

- a) Group recitation helps to reinforce and preserve the Qur'an in a society where many people rarely find time to review what they memorized years ago.
- b) Since the recitation is done in the rendition of Imam Warsh from Nafi', group recitation is instrumental in teaching some of the basic rules of this recitation to the masses, and helps them to learn how to read a *mushaf* written according to the rules of this rendition.
- c) Group recitation in the mosque produces the appropriate peace and serenity that should exist in mosques, and lessens the number of conversations about worldly matters, which are to be kept out of the mosque.

Another point worth mentioning is that the long standing tradition of Morocco and some of its neighbors endures without any of the reputable Maliki scholars of the country speaking in condemnation of the practice. If we take all of this into account, we can justifiably say that the Maliki scholars of Morocco in their initiation of and support for this practice are well within the parameters of the Maliki School. And Allah knows best.

¹⁹ *Al-Zahiri, 'Ali b. Ahmad ibn Sa'id b. Hazm. Al-Muhalla bi al-Athar, Dar al-Fikr: 1405/1984, pp. 154-155, Mas'alat #495.*

on the basis of the hadith wherein the Prophet ﷺ said,

“Prayer in congregation is more superior than prayer as in individual by 27 grades.” Or as in another narration “by 25 times.”²⁰

As for raising the hands in supplication [3] besides in the rain prayer (*istisqa*),²¹ Malik also disliked it, and said that it wasn't one of the actions of the learned (*fuqaha*).²² However, those who do raise their hands in supplication have numerous hadiths of various narration found in the 6 Books (Bukhari, Muslim, Abu Dawud, Tirmidhi, Nasa'i, and Ibn Majah) that support their actions. A number of these hadiths can be found mentioned in my article entitled, “Raising Hands During Supplication.” One of them is the hadith reported by Bukhari on the authority of Abu Musa Al-Ash'ari who said,

“The Prophet ﷺ supplicated. Then he raised his hands. And I saw the whiteness of his armpits.”

Textual evidence for group supplication (*du'a*) and *dhikr* [4 – 5], for starters, can be found in the report that was already mentioned wherein it is said that the Prophet ﷺ said that Allah said,

“Whoever makes mention of Me in an assembly, I'll make mention of him in a assembly better than it...”

²⁰ Bukhari. Kitab al-Adhan, Chapter 30

²¹ Ibn Al-Qasim relates in *Al-Mudawwana Al-Kubra* that it was related to him that Malik was seen raising his hands during the rain prayer (*istisqa*). Other than that, it was common knowledge to his companions that he disliked raising the hands in supplication or in any other place other than the opening *takbira* of the Salat. [Refer to *Al-Mudawwana al-Kubra*: 1/107-108]

²² Ibn Hajar Al-'Asqalani said,

“Ibn Al-Tin mentioned about 'Abd Allah b. 'Umar b. Ghanim that he related about Malik that raising the hands in *du'a* is not of the affair of the jurists (*fuqaha*).” [Fath Al-Bari Sharh Sahih Al-Bukhari 12: 430]

The point is that practically every issue mentioned above that Imam Malik or others raised any contention with has some form of textual evidence to support it.²³ On that basis, it would fail the litmus test for *bid'a* as defined both by the majority of scholars and as defined by Al-Shatibi, in spite of the fact that the latter (Al-Shatibi) falls into contradiction with his own stipulations for *bid'a*, since he refused to abandon the positions of his Imam.

Dhikr in Congregation

A believer must be honest and ask himself, “Why do I object to congregational *dhikr*?” And, “What is the harm in it?” If we are sincere and honest, we'd know that the only reason so many of us object to such a practice is that we have been thoroughly inundated with material that encourage us to be opposed to anything that resembles ‘what the Sufis do.’ I mean, we have all been affected by the pseudo-Salafi neo-Wahhabi thought.

I, myself, am not a Sufi and the number of times that I've *involuntarily*²⁴ been in attendance at any group *dhikr* sessions I can count on one hand. However, this is about defending and manifesting the truth about a particular religious matter, not about bashing or aiding any particular faction of Muslims.

Dhikr is no more than the mention of Allah or one of his names on our tongues a specific number of times in hopes to be rewarded immensely, and to come closer to our Creator. This is like what we customarily do at the end of

²³ In spite of there being textual evidence to support this practice and those that will be mentioned later, one should not understand that I have abandoned the Maliki School or even disagree with the standard and commonly accepted views of Imam Malik. I am merely attempting to make an argument for those who accept these practices, and show that they have ample evidence from the hadiths that substantiate their arguments according to their principles and methodological approaches, even if these things are disliked according to Maliki principles.

²⁴ I place emphasis here not to condemn the acts of the Sufis, but to stress that there is a strong basis for accepting that my intention from writing this essay is not driven by a desire to champion any personal or group position. So the argument needs to be given close and sincere consideration.

every congregational prayer when we say 'Subhan Allah' 33 times, 'Alhamdulillah' 33 times, and 'Allah Akbar' 33 times, etc. It is also like when we say in ruku' 'Subhan Rabbi Al-'Azim,' or in *sajda*, 'Subhan Rabbi Al-'Ala.' But these are times of individual *dhikr*.

If we really think hard, we'll realize that [1] there is really no harm in congregational *dhikr*, and [2] we are already engaged in it on a regular basis. And if that is so, we need to see that there is a great sense of inconsistency in our behavior when we come out to condemn those we label as Sufis when they decide to do the same.

For instance, Muslims on Hajj are regularly involved with reciting the *Talbiya*. And by the *talbiya*, I mean the words, "Labbayk Allahu Labbayk! Labbaka La Sharika laka Labbak! Innal-Hamda wan-Ni'mata laka wal-Mulk! La Sharika laka!" We say this in congregation. And it is group *dhikr*.

On the day of the 'Id, Muslims come together to recite the *takbira*. And the *takbira* is to say, "Allahu Akbar Allahu Akbar Allahu Akbar! La ilaha illa Allah! Allahu Akbar Allahu Akbar! Wa lillahil-Hamd!"²⁵ And that is group *dhikr*.

²⁵ In case someone says that reciting the *Takbira* of the 'Id in unison is a *bid'a* as many Salafis say in spite of the fact that they claim not to place anything before the Qur'an and the authentic hadiths, consider the following:

Imam al-Bukhari said in his *Sahih* in Kitab al-'Idayn, Chapter 11,

"Ibn 'Umar and Abu Hurayra used to go out to the market place during the first 10 days [of Dhu al-Hijja], and they would recite the *takbira*, and the people recited the *takbira* with them..."

Then he reports the following in Chapter 12,

"Umar [ibn Al-Khattab] used to recite the *takbira* in his tent in Mina. So the people in the masjid would hear him. Then, they'd recite the *takbira*, and then the people in the market places would recite the *takbira* until Mina was shaking with *takbir*. And Ibn 'Umar would recite the *takbira* in Mina on those days [of Hajj], after the prescribed prayers, [while] on his mat in his camping

place, where he sat, and where he walked during all of those days. And Maymuna [bint Harith] (the Prophet's wife) used to recite the *takbira* on the Day of the Sacrifice. And the women used to recite the *takbira* behind Aban b. 'Uthman [b. 'Affan] and 'Umar b. 'Abd Al-'Aziz during the days of immolation (tashriq) with the men inside the masjid."

Then he reports in hadith #971 on the authority of Umm 'Atiya who says,

"We were ordered to come out on the day of the 'Id and even bring out the unmarried woman (*bikr*) from her protected secrecy (*khidr*), and yet even [to bring out] those who were menstruating. Then they'd be behind the men (*nas*), and then they (the women) would recite the *takbir* along with their *takbir* and supplicate with their supplication, hoping for the blessing of that day and its purity."

Abu Dawud also reports that Mujahid (the student of Ibn 'Abbas) said,

"Abu Hurayra and Ibn 'Umar used to come to the market place during the [first] ten days, and they would recite the *takbira* and the people would recite the *takbira* along with them. And they came out for no other reason than for that."

As for the words of the *takbira* as reported from some of the Salaf, Imam Ja'far Al-Faryabi reports in his book, *Kitab Al-'Idayn*,

"Ishaq b. Rahuwayh stated to us—Jarir informed us—on the authority of Yazid b. Abi Ziyad that he said,

"I witnessed Sa'id b. Jubayr, Mujahid, and 'Abd Al-Rahman b. Abi Layla—or two of the three of them—as well as what I witnessed from the learned people saying during the ten days [of Dhu al-Hijja] is:

When we are in Salat, and the Imam comes to the end of *Al-Fatiha* by saying, “*Ghayril-Maghdubi ‘alayhim wa lad-Dallin.*” We all say in congregation, ‘*Amin.*’ And that is group *dhikr*, especially since in one view, ‘*Amin*’ is one of the names of Allah.²⁶ And according to the stronger view, ‘*Amin*’ means ‘O Allah! Answer our prayer!’ And that would make this a group *du’a* (supplication).²⁷

When the Imam moves from one position to another in Salat, after he says ‘*Allahu Akbar,*’ most or all of us say ‘*Allahu Akbar*’ in unison. And that is congregational *dhikr*. And when he ends the prayer by saying ‘*As-Salamu ‘alaykum wa rahmatullah* [twice],’ all of us follow suit and say the same thing in unison. And that is a group supplication.

The point in the end is that our actions clearly show that we are accepting of congregational *du’a* and *dhikr*.²⁸ So why do we lambaste those

Allahu Akbar, Allahu Akbar, Allahu Akbar, La ilaha illa Allahu, wAllahu Akbar, Allahu Akbar, wa lillahil-hamd.”

²⁶ Qadi Abu Bakr Ibn Al-‘Arabi mentions this view in his *Ahkam Al-Qur’an* but rebuffs it as being weak. [1/12].

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ The following hadith already cited can also be used as proof for the validity of group supplication,

Bukhari reports in hadith #971 on the authority of Umm ‘Atiya who says,

“We were ordered to come out on the day of the ‘Id and even bring out the unmarried woman (*bikr*) from her protected secrecy (*khidr*), and yet even [to bring out] those who were menstruating. Then they’d be behind the men (*nas*), and then they (the women) would recite the *takbir* along with their *takbir* and supplicate with their supplication, hoping for the blessing of that day and its purity.”

Muslims who decide to meet in their homes and elsewhere with a group of believers to do something similar?

What is so evil about this practice? Are they chanting something that would be equivalent to *kufr*? If so, what words are those? Even if they happen to publicly make a *du’a* for a person who is deceased by name, like ‘Abdul-Qadir al-Jilani or Bawa Muhayyadeen²⁹, what *kufr* is in that?

The portion of the hadith that is pertinent to this discussion is when she says, “...and then they (the women) would recite the *takbir* along with their *takbir* and supplicate with their supplication...”

So if they “supplicated *with* their supplication,” this means that the *du’a* (supplication) was one carried out in congregation. And for those who champion the hadith, they’d have to yield to the indications of this hadith, and allow for Muslims to supplicate Allah in a group, just as they allow for people to repeat a congregational prayer in a masjid after the Imam’s prayer based on the hadith dealing with the virtue of praying in congregation already cited.

²⁹ The Bawa Muhayyiddeen Masjid is a mosque and multi-faith fellowship organization located in Philadelphia, PA. The Muslim custodians of the mosque and members consider themselves to be Sufis of the Qadari Order. For years, most of the attendees of other mosques have avoided any interaction with them, due to the decades old Sufi-phobic attitudes of most Muslims living in the city. Rumors for years have been that the Muslims who attend the fellowship and who pray in the mosque are guilty of beliefs in the universality of all religions i.e. they supposedly believe that a Christian and Jew do not have to accept Islam in order to make it to Paradise after death. Another rumor circulated was that they do incantations after Salat, which include prayers directed to the Shaykh. In other words, they pray to the Shaykh instead of praying to Allah.

I’m not a Sufi. I’m not a member of any particular Sufi order. And I am not a member of the Bawa Muhayyiddeen Masjid/Fellowship. But I do pray there occasionally. And I’m close to some of those who are members. In my experience and from my conversations with those who have been members of the mosque/fellowship since the time of Bawa, none of the claims listed above can be substantiated. Furthermore, they are just outright slander! The unfortunate thing is that the Muslims typically believe slanderous accusations like these launched against other Muslims without any hard proof, even though the Qur’an tells us that if anyone judges by other than what Allah has revealed, then he is an unbeliever (*kafir*) [Qur’an 5:44]. And to accept one Muslim’s word about another Muslim without

Can it be said that someone is praying to dead people, when all they are doing is making a prayer for them?

Allah, in numerous occasions, calls us to make regular mention of Him. Consider the following verses,

“O You who believe! Make much dhikr (mention) of Allah. And declare His innocence from imperfection by morning and evening.” [Qur’an 33: 41]

“There is a beautiful example for you in Allah’s Messenger for whomever hopes in Allah and The Last Day, and does much dhikr (mention) of Allah.” [Qur’an 33: 22]

And from the Sunnah, I’ll close with the following hadith related by Imam Bukhari in his *Sahih*,

On the authority of Abu Hurayra, the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said,

“Verily Allah has angels who travel back and forth on the roads seeking out the People of *Dhikr*. And when they find a people making mention of Allah, they call out: “Come to your need!” He (the Prophet) [then] said, “Then they encircle them with their wings [all the way] to the Lowest Heaven.” He said, “Then their Lord ﷻ asks them [about it], even though He knows better than they do how His slaves will respond. One says: “They declare Your innocence from imperfection. They declare Your greatness. They praise You. And,

they declare Your majesty.” He (Allah) says: “Have they ever seen Me?” They say: “No! By Allah! They have not seen You!” Then He says: “What if they saw Me?” They say: “If they saw You, they would be more intense in [their] service to You, more intense in praise of You, and more intense in glorification of You.” Then He says: “What do they ask of Me?” One replies: “They ask of You Paradise.” He says: “And have they seen it?” One replies: “No! By Allah, O Lord! They have not seen it!” He then says: “What if they had seen it?” They say: “If they had seen it, they’d be more intense in eagerness for it, more intense in seeking it, and greater in their desire for it.” He then says, “Then from what do they seek refuge?” They say: “From the Fire.” He says: “And have they seen My fire?” They say: “No! By Allah, O Lord! They have not seen it!” He then says: “And what if they had seen it?” They say: “If they saw it, they’d be most intense in flight from it, and more vehement in fear of it.” Then He says: “Then I make you all witness to that I have forgiven them.” Then an angel from the angels says: “But *So-and-So* is amongst them, who is not from them. He only came for some need he had!” He (Allah) responds: “They are those who sit, with whom the one who sits doesn’t suffer misfortune.”³⁰

substantiation is judging by other than what Allah has revealed.

I have not read much of what has been attributed to Shaykh Bawa Muhayyiddeen. So I can neither confirm nor deny any claims of heretical ideas or beliefs attributed to him. But what I do know for a fact is that the slanderous accusations launched against the Muslims of the mosque are unjustified. I can also testify to the fact that the *dhikr* and prayers the worshippers do after each Salat do not contain anything objectionable or even close to being *shirk* or *kufr* as the usual people claim. They do not pray to Bawa. They pray for him and for Shaykh ‘Abd Al-Qadir Al-Jilani.

Ibn Hajar Al-‘Asqalani says about this hadith,

“And in the hadith there is [an allusion to] the virtue of the sittings (*majalis*) for *dhikr* and [the virtue] of those who do *dhikr*, along with the virtue of coming

³⁰ Bukhari. Kitab al-Da’awat, Chapter 66

together as a group for that [aim]...”³¹

And this is one of the clearest proofs for the permissibility of congregational *dhikr* and the virtue of those involved in it. For, all of this is said with respect to people who gather upon the remembrance of Allah.

“Verily Allah has angels who travel back and forth on the roads seeking out the People of *Dhikr*...”

And one cannot say that ‘*Dhikr*’ is a reference to religious classes or lectures instead of ‘making mention of Allah in unison,’ since the statement that,

“They declare Your innocence from imperfection. They declare Your greatness. They praise You...”

is a reference to saying ‘*Subhan Allah! Allahu Akbar! Alhamdulillah!*’ as indicated by the Arabic wording, ‘*yusabbihunaka, wa yukabbirunaka, wa yahmadunaka, wa yumajjidunaka.*’

And none of this is said to say that it is ‘compulsory’ for Muslims to be involved in group *dhikr* and *du'a*. It is only meant to show that those who do it are upon firm grounding. So if someone still has an aversion to this practice, he has every right to avoid it. But he has no right to condemn those who are involved in it also. Allah distinguished us from the animals through reason. So let us be reasonable.

Abdullah bin Hamid Ali

³¹ *Al-'Asqalani, Ibn Hajar. Fath Al-Bari Sharh Sahih Al-Bukhari, Dar al-Fikr 1446/1996, Beirut, Lebanon: 12/513.*