

From Mu'ādh b. Jabal رضي الله عنه: The Messenger of Allah صلى الله عليه وسلم said: "The people of Paradise shall not have any regrets save for that hour which passed them by when they were not engaged in Allah's remembrance."²⁰⁶

STATEMENTS OF THE GNOSTICS

Sahl b. 'Abdullāh al-Tustarī said: "I know of no other disobedience more odious than leaving off remembrance of the Lord." Abū al-Ḥasan al-Shādhilī رضي الله عنه said: "From among the signs of hypocrisy is heaviness of remembrance upon the tongue, so repent unto Allah صلى الله عليه وسلم, and He shall make remembrance light upon your tongue."²⁰⁷ It is as if he deduced his saying from Allah's description of the hypocrites: ﴿Indeed, the hypocrites seek to deceive Allah, whereas it is He that deceives them, and when they stand for prayer they stand lazily, seeking to be seen of men and they do not remember Allah save a little﴾ [al-Nisā': 142].

It has been said: "Everything has its punishment, and the punishment of the Gnostic is being cut off from Allah's remembrance."

He who is intelligent must wake up from his heedlessness and strive with seriousness of purpose to revive and awaken his heart to remember his Lord. He must take on the attributes of the believers who remember Allah in abundance. He must be far removed from the character traits of the hypocrites who do not remember Allah but a little.

MOVEMENT DURING REMEMBRANCE

Movement during remembrance is a good thing because it brings energy to the body for that act of worship. It is permissible in the Sacred Law, as proven by the narration of Aḥmad in his *Musnad*, and al-Maḥdisī, with sound narrators from the Ḥadīth of Anas رضي الله عنه who said: "Once, the Abyssinians were dancing in front of the Messenger of Allah صلى الله عليه وسلم, saying in their language: 'Muḥammad is a righteous servant.' He صلى الله عليه وسلم asked: 'What are they saying?' It was said: '[They are saying]: 'Muḥammad is a righteous servant.''" When he saw them in that state, he did not censure them. Rather, he approved of their act. It is known that rulings in the Sacred Law are taken from his صلى الله عليه وسلم statements, actions, and tacit approvals. Since he approved of their

²⁰⁶ Al-Ṭabarānī and al-Bayhaqī

²⁰⁷ *Rawḍa al-Nāziriin*: p. 44

action and did not censure them, it is clear that it is permissible. This Ḥadīth contains evidence that it is permissible to gather between permissible movement and exaltation of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ. It also proves that movement during remembrance is not described as forbidden dance, rather, it is permissible because it energizes the body for remembrance and assists one in having presence of heart with Allah ﷻ—if [one’s] intention is sound—for actions are according to their ends and actions are based only on their intentions and every person shall have what he intends.

Let us pay attention to Imām ‘Alī ؑ and how he describes the Companions of the Prophet ﷺ. Abū Arāka said: “Once, I prayed the morning prayer with ‘Alī. When he moved from his position, he remained sitting as if he was sad. When the rays of the sun were upon the wall of the Mosque, covering the span of a spear, he [stood and] prayed two units of prayer. Afterwards, he wrung his hands and said: ‘I have seen the Companions of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ. I see no one resembling them. By Allah! They used to rise in the morning disheveled, dust-covered, pale, with something between their eyes resembling goat’s knees [marks of prostration], as they had spent the night reciting Allah’s Book, turning from their feet to their foreheads [in prayer]. If Allah was mentioned they swayed the way trees sway on a windy day, then their eyes would pour out tears until—by Allah!—they soaked their clothes.’”²⁰⁸

The expression of Imām ‘Alī that concerns us here is his statement: “...they swayed the way trees sway on a windy day...” This statement is explicit in stating that it was movement, and it repudiates the view of those who said it is a forbidden innovation. This statement also establishes the unrestricted permissibility of movement during remembrance.

This Ḥadīth was used as evidence by Shaykh ‘Abd al-Ghanī al-Nablūsī رحمه الله in one of his essays that he wrote in support of movement during remembrance. He said: “This is explicitly clear in stating that the Companions used strong movements during remembrance, and this is based upon the fact that one is not taken to account when he moves, stands up, and sits down in anyway because he has not committed an act of disobedience or intended one, as was mentioned.”

²⁰⁸ *Al-Bidāya wal-Nihāya fī al-Tārīkh* by the Imām, the Ḥāfiẓ, Qur’ānic exegete, and historian: Ismā‘īl ibn Kathīr al-Qurashī al-Hāshimī (d. 744 H.): 8/6. This narration was also narrated by Abū Nu‘aym in *al-Ḥilya*: 1/76

Having said this however, there are a group of fraudulent reprobates who entered the ranks of the Sufis and ascribed themselves to them while they (the Sufis) were innocent of them. They have tarnished the beauty of the gatherings of remembrance due to the things they have added to it of misguided innovations and evil actions that are forbidden in the pure Sacred Law, such as: playing musical instruments that are forbidden, intentionally gathering with prepubescent boys, and immoral singing. Due to this, it was no longer an act that served as a means to purify the hearts from their grime and establish a connection with Allah. Nay, it became a trap for heedless souls and a way of fulfilling lowly desires.

What is so unfortunate is that some of the claimants to knowledge have attacked the gatherings of remembrance. They have not made a distinction between the deviated and fraudulent elements, and the people of remembrance, the spiritual travellers (unto Allah) and sincere ones who, through remembrance of Allah, are increased in the firmness of their faith, uprightness in their dealings, loftiness in their character, and contentment in their hearts.

There are fair minded scholars who have distinguished between the true Sufis who traverse upon the path of the Greatest Messenger ﷺ, and the deviated and fraudulent elements. These (scholars) clarified the ruling of Allah concerning remembrance and at the head of them, the 'Allāma, Ibn 'Ābidīn in his essay titled: *Shifā' al-'Alīl* ('Healing the Sick'). He attacked the fraudulent elements among the Sufis, exposed their blameworthy innovations and evil acts during remembrance, and warned against them and against gathering with them. He said:

We have nothing [negative] to say against the truthful ones of our masters among the Sufis who are innocent from every low trait. The Imām of the two groups²⁰⁹, our master al-Junayd was told: "Certain people indulge in ecstatic behaviour, and sway with their bodies." He replied: "Leave them to their happiness with Allah. They are the ones whose affections have been smashed by the path and whose breasts have been torn apart by effort, and they are unable to bear it. There is no blame on them if they breathe for awhile as a remedy for their intense state. If you tasted what they taste, you would certainly excuse their exuberance."

²⁰⁹ Meaning the people of the *Sharī'a* (the Sacred Law) and the *Ḥaqīqa* (the Spiritual Reality).—[t]

...[T]he adept ‘Allāma, Ibn Kamāl Pāshā²¹⁰ responded, just as al-Junayd before him responded, when he was asked for a formal legal verdict concerning this. He said (in some poetry):

*If you investigate, you will not find any harm
in outwardly manifesting ecstatic behaviour
Or swaying, if you were sincere in abstaining
from that which is blameworthy
So, you may stand and hasten upon your feet,
and it is fully appropriate
For the one who’s Master has called him to hasten on (his) head*

So, the dispensation that is mentioned in these situations, during remembrance and audition [*samā’*], is exclusively for the Gnostics who devote all their time to the best of actions; those who are travelling the mystic path and who are in control of their lower selves; keeping away from ugly states. These individuals do not listen to anyone save the Deity. They long for no one but Him. When they remember Him, they sway; when they are thankful to him, they disclose it; if they fall into an ecstatic state, they loudly express it; when they witness Him, they relax and fall at ease; when they roam freely in the Divine Presence, they spend their nights awake; and when ecstasy overcomes them and they drink from the fountains of His Divine Will. From them are those who are overtaken by the [Divine] magnificence, thus they fall into submission and melt away. From them are those who are struck by the luminance of Divine kindness, thus they move in delight. From them are those who love rises over them whilst in the direction of [Divine] closeness, so they fall into stupor and are absent. This is the answer that is apparent to me.

...[W]e have nothing to say regarding those who follow them, drink from their fountain, and find within themselves longing and aspiration to the All-Knowing King (Allah). Rather, our words (of censure) are directed towards those of the corrupt and blameworthy laymen.²¹¹

From this, we see that Ibn ‘Ābidīn رحمه الله allowed the outward display of ecstasy and movement during remembrance, and we see that his legal verdict concerning it was one of permissibility.

²¹⁰ Ibn Kamāl Pāshā (d. 940 H.) was one the great scholars and polymaths of the Ottoman Empire. He was a contemporary of al-Ḥāfiẓ Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī and both scholars became famous for their vast knowledge. Comparisons were made between the knowledge and depth of Pāshā and al-Suyūṭī, and most scholars concluded that both were nearly equal, with al-Suyūṭī having more mastery in the Ḥadīth sciences, and with Pāshā having more mastery in the rational sciences.—[t]

²¹¹ *Majmū’a Rasā’il Ibn ‘Ābidīn*, essay six titled: *Shifā’ al-‘Alīl wa-Wabl al-Ghalīl fī Ḥukm al-Waṣīyya bil-Khatamāt wal-Taḥāliṭ*: p. 172-173

[We also see] that the texts he cited in forbiddance (of movement during remembrance) within his well know *Hāshiya* in volume three, are understood in the event that there are evil practices committed within the gatherings of remembrance, such as musical instruments, striking with iron, gathering with handsome young boys, intending the meanings of the words (of poetry) to them and courting them and other such evils.

Those who forbid (movement during remembrance) and hold fast to the words of Ibn ‘Ābidīn, only do so because they did not peruse his words in *Majmū‘a al-Rasā’il*, where he made a distinction (as has proceeded) between the fraudulent miscreants and those who are of the truthful. He allowed outward expressions of ecstasy for the Gnostics and those arriving at the path as well as those among the beginners of the path who follow them. If you go back and review the two works (of Ibn ‘Ābidīn), the truth will become clear to you.

There is no doubt that outwardly expressing ecstasy entails working to bring it about and manifesting it, although it is not present in reality.²¹² There is no harm in that if the intention is correct—as stated by the ‘Allāma, Ibn ‘Ābidīn in his gloss:

*If you investigate, you will not find any harm in ecstatic behaviour
Or swaying if you were sincere in abstaining
from that which is blameworthy*

So, if outwardly manifesting ecstasy is legally permissible and of no harm—as stated by the jurists—then displays of actual ecstasy are permissible, *a fortiori*. The ecstasy and outward manifestation of ecstasy among the Sufis is nothing more than a portion of what the Companions of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ were upon.

The Muftī of the esteemed Shāfi‘ī jurists in Mecca—may Allah sanctify her—the great ‘Allāma, Aḥmad Zaynī Daḥlān رحمه الله cited a scene from one of their (the Companion’s) states in his famous book on the Prophetic biography. In his commentary, he stated:

After the conquest of Khaybar, Ja‘far b. Abī Ṭālib ؓ returned from Abyssinia along with some of the Muslims: some sixteen men. Ja‘far then met with the Prophet ﷺ, kissed his forehead and embraced him. He ؓ stood for him, just as he had stood for Ṣafwan b. Umayya and ‘Adī b. Ḥātim when they came to him (from travel), then he said:

²¹² The verbal noun used here is *tawājūd*. Verbs falling under this morphological pattern indicate that the doer manifests the particular action or acts as if he has a particular quality.—[t]

“I do not know of which of the two things I am the most delighted about: the conquest of Khaybar, or the return of Ja‘far.” Then he ﷺ said to Ja‘far: “You resemble me in both my manners and my physical characteristics.” Upon hearing this, Ja‘far ﷺ danced from the sweetness of what was said, and the Prophet ﷺ did not censure him for his dancing. This has served as the basis for the dancing of the Sufis when they experience ecstasy in the gatherings of remembrance and audition.²¹³

The ‘Allāma, al-Alūsī, said in his Qur’ānic exegesis, commenting on the words of the exalted: ﴿Those who remember Allah standing, sitting, and while upon their sides...﴾ [Āl ‘Imrān: 191]:

In light of this, the narration of Ibn ‘Umar ﷺ, ‘Urwa b. al-Zubayr ﷺ and a group of Companions is understood, where it is narrated that they went out to the prayer-place on the day of ‘īd (celebration), and started to remember Allah ﷻ. Some of them said: “Did not Allah say: ﴿Those who remember Allah standing and sitting...﴾?” They then stood up and remembered Allah while on their feet. This narration indicates that by this act, they intended to seek blessings through a way of conforming to the verse by (performing) one aspect that it indicates.²¹⁴

Sīdī Abū Madyan ﷺ said:

*Say to the one who censures the people (of Sufism) on account of ecstasy:
 Leave us alone if you have not tasted the meaning
 of drinking from the fountain of longing
 Yes, O you who is ignorant of its meaning!
 When the souls move out of longing for the meeting,
 the outward physical bodies dance
 O young man, do you not look at the caged bird
 And see that when its home is mentioned, it begins to sing?
 By singing, it releases that which is in its heart
 And the bodily limbs become shaky both physically and in spiritually
 That, young man is also the state of lover’s souls!
 Longing for the higher realms constantly shake them
 Do we force them to be patient while they are in a state of longing?
 And is the one who witnesses the spiritual meaning able to be patient?
 So stand upright, O driver of the lovers!
 And murmur for us in the name of the Beloved and put us at ease*

²¹³ Al-Sīra al-Nabawiyya wal-Āthar al-Muhammadiyya of Zaynī Dahlān, found in the margins of the Sīra al-Ḥalabiyya: 2/ 252. The Ḥadīth is found in al-Bukhārī in his Ṣaḥīḥ in the book of Ṣulḥ.

²¹⁴ Rūḥ al-Ma‘ānī: 4/140

SUMMARY

From what has been mentioned, it is understood that movement during remembrance is legally permissible. This is especially the case when considering that the command to perform remembrance is unrestricted and encompasses every state. Whoever remembers Allah ﷻ, while sitting or standing, resting or walking, or moving or staying still, is carrying out that which is sought from him and is complying with the Divine command.

The one who claims that movement during remembrance is either forbidden or detested is required to bring his evidence, because he is restricting some unrestricted states as opposed to others with a unique ruling. No matter the case, the goal of the Muslim when entering into the gatherings of remembrance is to carry out worship by the act of remembrance. Movement during it is not a condition (for its validity); however, it is a means for gaining energy during that act of worship and a way of imitating the people of ecstasy if the intention is correct.

*Imitate if you are not like them
Imitation of the generous one is success*

SINGING RELIGIOUS ODES AND AUDITION WITHIN THE MOSQUE

From ‘Ubayy b. Ka’b ؓ: The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: “Indeed, some poetry contains wisdom.”²¹⁵

From Anas ؓ also: “During the construction of the Mosque (in Medina), the Messenger of Allah ﷺ used to carry bricks with the people while they were singing:

*O Allah! There is no true life other than the life of the hereafter
So give victory to the Anṣār (Helpers) and the Muhājirīn (Migrants)!²¹⁶*

From Salama b. al-Akwa’ ؓ: “We went out with the Prophet ﷺ to Khaybar at night time, when a man, who was a poet from the people of ‘Āmir b. al-Akwa’ said: ‘Will you not listen to us?’ He descended from his riding animal and came to the people and started to sing:

²¹⁵ Al-Bukhārī and Muslim

²¹⁶ The word for singing used here is ‘rajz’, which is a particular poetic meter in used in Arabic poetry. The Arabic transliteration of the poem is: ‘Allāhumma lā ‘aysha illa ‘ayshu l-ākhirah, fa-nṣur al-anṣār wal-muhājira.’—[t]