

الحمد لله رب العالمين , والصلاة و السلام على اشرف المرسلين ,
و على اله و اصحابه اجمعين , و بعد .

All praises are for Allah and Peace and Blessings be upon His final Messenger (S.A).

The use of the beads which Muslims use while reciting tasbeeh is one which is permissible in Islam. It is often referred to as ‘a tasbeeh’, ‘the subhah’ or ‘the misbahah’, all meaning the same thing, that is, ‘the Dhikr beads’.

On this issue, it should be noted that one is encouraged to count on the fingers while reciting tasbeeh etc. This is from the instructions of the Prophet (S.A) and he himself used to count on his fingers.

In this regard, it is reported from Abdullah bin Amr (R.A) that he said,

رَأَيْتُ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ يَعْقِدُ التَّسْبِيحَ

'I saw the Prophet (S.A) counting the tasbeeh with his hand'.¹

The following is also reported from Busairah (a Muhajir woman, (Sahabiya)):

أَنَّ النَّبِيَّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ أَمَرَهُنَّ أَنْ يُرَاعِينَ بِالتَّكْبِيرِ، وَالتَّقْدِيسِ،
وَالتَّهْلِيلِ، وَأَنْ يَعْقِدْنَ بِالأَنَامِلِ، فَإِنَّهُنَّ مَسْئُولَاتٌ، مُسْتَنْطَقَاتٌ

'The Prophet (S.A) ordered them to observe the Takbeer (the greatnest of Allah – by saying Allahu Akbar); to observe and establish the purity of Allah by saying Subhhanallah and to utter La ilaaha ilalaah. He told them to count these on their finger for these (the fingers) shall be questioned, and they shall be made to speak'.²

¹ Abu Dawood (Hadith No.1502, Pg.245, Darussalam / Tirmidhi, Hadith No.3411, Pg.1012, Darussalam / Nasaai, Hadith No.1356, Pg.274, Darussalam and Hakim, who graded it as Saheeh (sound), Hadith No.2043, Pg.103, Vol.2, Qademi Kutub Khana, who graded it as Saheeh (sound)

² Abu Dawood, Hadith No.1501, Pg.245, Darussalam / Similar narrations recorded in Tirmizi, Hadith No.3583, Pg.1061, Darussalam / Ibn Abi Shaiba, Hadith No.7738, Vol.5,

Based on these instructions, it is clear that the Messenger of Allah (S.A) encouraged his followers to count the recitation of Dhikr etc. on the fingers, since it will be of great benefit to the individual as mentioned in the above tradition.

While this is the case, it should be noted that if one recites the Dhikr on beads (for easy counting etc.), it will be permissible in Islam and would not be deemed to be a reprehensible act or a bid'ah (innovation).

The use of the beads is basically done to allow ease in counting the amount of times an individual wishes to recite a Dhikr (i.e. a certain phrase in the remembrance of Allah). It is not looked at as a religious symbol of Islam, nor does it bring about the violation of any rule, order or teaching of Islam. Instead, it is one which has been accepted in Islam and has not been considered as an innovation by many of the great scholars of the 'Salafus Saaliheen', (pious predecessors). In fact, there is sufficient

Pg.216, Muhammad Awama / Hakim, Hadith No.2045, Pg.104, Vol.2, Qademi Kutub Khana

evidence that serves as a basis to prove that the use of beads as a media of counting Dhikr etc. was actually endorsed by the Prophet (S.A) and the Sahabahs (R.A).

In this regard, a Saheeh (sound) narration has been recorded by Imam Tirmidhi, Hakim and Tabrani from Safiya bint Huyay (the wife of the Messenger of Allah (S.A) that she said,

دَخَلَ عَلَيَّ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ وَبَيْنَ يَدَيَّ أَرْبَعَةُ آلَافِ نَوَاةٍ
أَسْبَحُ بِهَا، قَالَ: لَقَدْ سَبَّحْتَ بِهَذِهِ، أَلَا أَعْلَمُكَ بِأَكْثَرَ مِمَّا سَبَّحْتَ؟
فَقُلْتُ: بَلَى عَلَّمَنِي. فَقَالَ: قُولِي: سُبْحَانَ اللَّهِ عَدَدَ خَلْقِهِ

‘The Messenger of Allah came to me and in front of me were four thousand date stones with which I was doing the Tasbeeh (reciting the phrase Subhaanallaah). He said, ‘you have done tasbeeh with these’. Should I not teach you with that which is more than the amount which you have done Tasbeeh of?’ I said, ‘Teach me O Prophet of Allah’. He (the Prophet) said, ‘Say, ‘Subhaanallaah Adada Khalqih’ (i.e. Glory be to Allah

to the extent (amount) of what He Has created of everything).³

This narration shows that Safiya bint Huyay, the wife of the blessed Messenger of Allah (S.A) had taken the date stones to make it easy in counting while reciting Tasbeeh. The Prophet (S.A) saw her and did not disapprove of her act. He was however amazed to see that she had so many date stones in front of her, hence, he ask what she was doing with them and she replied that she was doing tasbeeh with them. In response, the Messenger of Allah (S.A) did not rebuke her nor did he condemn her. He also did not ask her to stop this act of counting on the date seeds (or stones). Instead, he taught her a tasbeeh which will bring about more blessings in a shorter time.

It should be noted that the date seeds (stones) which were used by Safiya (R.A) was not one which had any religious significance in Islam (which made her gather

³ Tirmizi, Hadith No.3554, Pg. Darussalam /Similar narrations reported in Tabrani, Mujamul Kabeer, Hadith No.195, Vol.16, Pg.5655, Muasasah Rayan / Hakim, Hadith No.2046, Pg.104, Vol.2, Qademi Kutub Khana

so many of them). Instead, it was simply used as a media of easy counting of the tasbeeh which she wanted to do.

In another tradition narrated from Sa'ad bin Abi Waqas (R.A), it is stated

أَنَّهُ دَخَلَ مَعَ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ عَلَى امْرَأَةٍ وَبَيْنَ يَدَيْهَا نَوَى - أَوْ حَصَى - تُسَبِّحُ بِهِ، فَقَالَ: «أُخْبِرْكَ بِمَا هُوَ أَيْسَرُ عَلَيْكَ مِنْ هَذَا - أَوْ أَفْضَلُ -»، فَقَالَ: «وَسُبْحَانَ اللَّهِ عَدَدَ مَا خَلَقَ فِي السَّمَاءِ، وَسُبْحَانَ اللَّهِ عَدَدَ مَا خَلَقَ فِي الْأَرْضِ، وَسُبْحَانَ اللَّهِ عَدَدَ مَا خَلَقَ بَيْنَ ذَلِكَ، وَسُبْحَانَ اللَّهِ عَدَدَ مَا هُوَ خَالِقٌ، وَاللَّهُ أَكْبَرُ مِثْلَ ذَلِكَ، وَالْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ مِثْلَ ذَلِكَ، وَلَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ مِثْلَ ذَلِكَ، وَلَا حَوْلَ وَلَا قُوَّةَ إِلَّا بِاللَّهِ مِثْلَ ذَلِكَ»

That 'He went with the Prophet (S.A) to a woman who had in front of her date stones or pebbles which she was using to do tasbeeh (saying Subhaanallaah). The Prophet of Allah (S.A) said, 'I shall inform you of that which is easier than this and more virtuous. Say:

'Subhaanallaah Adada Ma Khalaqa Fis Samaa.

Subhaanallaah Adada Ma Khalaqa Fil Ard.

Subhaanallaah Adada Ma Baina Zaalik.

Subhaanallaah Adada Ma Huwa Khaliq.

Allahu Akbar Mithlu Zaalik

Wal Hamdu Lillaah Mithlu Zaalik

Wa Laailaaha illallaah Mithlu Zaalik

Wa Laa Hawla wa Laa Quwwata illa billah Mithlu Zaalik'.⁴

This tradition also shows that the Prophet (S.A) did not disapprove nor did he become displeas with the woman's act of using the date stones or pebbles to count her tasbeehs.

⁴ Recorded by Abu Dawood, Hadith No.1500, Pg.245, Darussalam / by Tirmizi, Hadith No.3568, Pg.1057, Darussalam, who graded it as Hasan (good), Nasa'i, Bazaar, Hadith No.1201, Pg.39, Vol.4, Darul kutub Ilmiya / Ibn Majah, Ibn Hibban, hadith No.837, Vol.3, Pg.118, Al Resalah Al Alamiya /Baihaqi, Shuabul Iman, Hadith No.595, Pg.116, Vol.2, Maktaba Rushd and Hakim, Hadith No.2047, Pg.104, Vol.2, Qademi Kutub Khana, who graded it as Saheeh (sound)

His statement to her shows that he gave her a beautiful form of tasbeeh which was easier and virtuous. It means that in saying this tasbeeh, she would not be required to count them on the stones and although it is short, she will receive more blessings for it.

The Messenger of Allah (S.A) did not condemn her act of counting her tasbeeh on date stones or pebbles, and although he instructed his companions to count on their fingers, he did not condemn this act of the woman.

Another tradition is recorded by Imam Baghwi in his ‘Mu’jam As Sahaba’ and also narrated by Ibn Asakir in his ‘Tareekh’ from Ubai bin Kaab (R.A) from his grandfather Baqiya from Abu Safiya, the freed slave of the Prophet (S.A). It is narrated

أَنَّهُ كَانَ يُوَضَّعُ لَهُ نِطْعٌ وَبُجَاءٌ بِزَبْنِيلٍ فِيهِ حَصَى فَيُسَبِّحُ بِهِ إِلَى نِصْفِ النَّهَارِ ثُمَّ يَرْفَعُ فَإِذَا صَلَّى أَتَى بِهِ فَيُسَبِّحُ حَتَّى يُمْسِيَ

‘That a leather mat used to be placed for Abu Safiya and then a basket (made of palm leaves) would be brought for him. In the basket, contained pebbles with

which he did the tasbeeh until midday. After this, the basket would be lifted (carried away) and when he performed his Salaah, it would be brought again. In this manner, he made the tasbeeh on these pebbles until the evening.⁵

Imam Ahmad has mentioned in ‘Az-Zuhd’ a narration from Yunus bin Ubaid from his mother who said,

‘I saw Abu Safiya, a companion of the Prophet (S.A), who was our neighbour, saying tasbeeh with the pebbles’.⁶

Ibn Saad has mentioned in his ‘Tabaqaat’ from Hakeem bin Ad Daili

أَنَّ سَعْدَ بْنَ أَبِي وَقَّاصٍ كَانَ يُسَبِّحُ بِالْحَصَى

‘that Saad bin Abi Waqas (R.A), a companion of the Prophet (S.A), used to make tasbeeh (reciting Subhaanallaah or other forms of Zikr) with pebbles’.⁷

⁵ Nailul Awtar, Pg.317, Vol.1, Darul Kutub Ilmiya

⁶ Nailul Awtar, Pg.317, Vol.1, Darul Kutub Ilmiya

Ibn Abi Shaiba has narrated in his Musannaf that the freed slave girl of Sa'ad bin Abi Waqas (the companion) said,

أَنَّ سَعْدًا كَانَ يُسَبِّحُ بِالْحَصَى وَالتَّوَى

‘That Sa’ad used to do the Tasbeeh on pebbles and date stones’.⁸

Ibn Saad has narrated in ‘At Tabaqaat’,

عَنْ فَاطِمَةَ بِنْتِ الْحُسَيْنِ بْنِ عَلِيٍّ بْنِ أَبِي طَالِبٍ أَنَّهَا كَانَتْ تُسَبِّحُ بِخَيْطٍ
مَعْقُودٍ فِيهِ

‘That Fatima the daughter of Husain bin Ali bin Abi Talib (R.A.) used to do tasbeeh on a thread which had knots upon it’.⁹

⁷ Nailul Awtar, Pg.317, Vol.1, Darul Kutub Ilmiya

⁸ Musannaf Ibn Abi Shaiba, Hadith No.7740, Vol.5, Pg.217, Muhammad Awama

⁹ Nailul Awtar, Pg.317, Vol.1, Darul Kutub Ilmiya

Abdullah, the son of Imam Ahmad ibn Hambal has narrated in ‘Zawaid uz Zuhd’ that Nu’aim bin Muhriz narrates from his grandfather,

عَنْ أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ أَنَّهُ كَانَ لَهُ خَيْطٌ فِيهِ أَلْفُ عُقْدَةٍ فَلَا يَنَامُ حَتَّى يُسَبِّحَ

‘That Abu Hurairah (R.A) had a thread on which there were one thousand knots. Abu Hurairah (R.A.) would not go to sleep until he made tasbeeh on all’.¹⁰

The great Tabiee scholar Ikrimah (R.A) says that Abu Hurairah (R.A) will not go to sleep until he recited twelve thousand tasbeehs on the knotted thread.

Imam Ahmad narrated in ‘Az Zuhd’ that Qasim bin Abdur Rahman said,

كَانَ لِأَبِي الدَّرْدَاءِ نَوَى مِنْ الْعَجْوَةِ فِي كَيْسٍ فَكَانَ إِذَا صَلَّى الْعَدَاةَ
أَخْرَجَهَا وَاحِدَةً وَاحِدَةً يُسَبِّحُ بِهَا حَتَّى يُنْفِذَهُنَّ.

‘Abu Darda (R.A.) the companion of the Prophet (S.A), had date stones of the Ajwa dates which he placed in a bag. When he performed the morning salaah (prayer),

¹⁰ Nailul Awtar, Pg.317, Vol.1, Darul Kutub Ilmiya

he would take them out, one by one, reciting tasbeeh on them until he completed all'.¹¹

These are authentic reports narrating the actions of the great and illustrious companions of the Prophet (S.A) who were nurtured and trained by the Prophet (S.A) himself. The likes of Abu Hurairah, Abu Darda, Abu Saeed Khudri and Sa'ad bin Abi Waqas (R.A.), all of whom used methods other than the fingers to count their tasbeeh/ zikr. Some used the date stones and others used the knotted thread. Obviously, the Prophet (S.A) himself did not use these, however, the companions understood from his blessed teachings that there was nothing wrong in doing what they did for the sake of counting the tasbeeh or zikr on the date stones or on the thread with knots.

Additionally, they knew that the Prophet (S.A) endorsed this method, as he had seen his wife Safiya bint Huyay (R.A) and also another woman with the date stones/ pebbles which they were using while doing the tasbeeh/ zikr, and he did not show any disapproval for it.

¹¹ Nailul Awtar, Pg.317, Vol.1, Darul Kutub Ilmiya

Hence, what we see from these narrations is that the basis for the use of beads, ‘Subhah’ or ‘Misbahah’ is evident from the approval of the Prophet (S.A) and also through the acts of his illustrious companions.

Besides the actions of the Sahabahs (R.A.), it is also evident that many of the Salafus Saaliheen (pious predecessors) approved of the use of the ‘Subha’, ‘Tasbeeh beads’, and they also used it.

Abu Dawood narrates from the hadith of Abu Nadhra Al Ghifari who said, that a Shaikh from Tafawa narrated to him saying, ‘I visited Abu Hurairah at Madina and I did not see anyone more kind to his guests than him. On one occasion, I was with him while he was on his bed. At that time, he had with him a sack in which there were pebbles or date stones and close to him was a slave girl. He would then do tasbeeh/ zikr on the date stones and when he had completed all that was in the sack, he would hand them to the slave girl who would place it in the sack and give it back to him where he would continue to do his tasbeeh/ zikr.’¹²

¹² Abu Dawood, Hadith No.2174, Pg.439, Darussalam

Imam Al Allama Jalaludeen Suyutee (died 911 A.H) has also recorded in his book 'Al Haawi Lil Fatawa', many names of the great scholars of the early centuries of Islam who used the 'beads' (Subha) while doing the tasbeeh/ zikr (remembrance of Allah). He mentioned that Umar Al Maliki said, 'I saw my teacher Hasan Al Basri with the 'Subha' (tasbeeh beads) in his hand and I asked, 'O my teacher, with your great status and the abundance of worship, until now you are using the beads (Subha). He said, 'This is something which I used in the beginning and I will not leave it in the end. I love to remember Allah with my heart and with my hand and my tongue'.¹³

Having narrated this, Imam Suyutee writes, 'The beads (Subha or Tasbeeh) is a reminder to remember Allah (it is a Mudhakhir). It is so because very rare it happens that a man sees it and does not remember Allah, and this is from its great benefits. For this reason, some of the Salaf As Saaliheen (pious predecessors) named it 'Mudhakhir' (a reminder)'.

¹³ Al Haawi Lil Fatawa, Pg.5, Vol.2, Maktaba Rasheediya, Queta, Balushistan, Pakistan

Imam Suyutee further stated:

'And from its benefits also, is that it helps one to constantly remember Allah. Whenever one sees it, he remembers that it is a media of zikr, so it leads him to the zikr (remembrance of Allah). So, how good it is as a cause to bring about the constant remembrance of Allah, the Mighty the Great. It is for this reason some of the Salafus Saalih named it 'Hablul Wasl' (A thread which connects). Some others have referred to it as 'Rabitatul Quloob', that which connects the heart'.¹⁴

Imam Suyutee has also narrated that Qazi Abul Abas Ahmad bin Khalikan has mentioned in his book that a Subha (the beads referred to as tasbeeh) was seen in the hand of Abul Qasim Junaid bin Muhammad (R.A.) and was asked, 'With such greatness and status, do you use the beads (i.e. the Subha)? He said, 'This is a media through which I reached my lord, I will not leave it'.¹⁵

¹⁴ Al Haawi Lil Fatawa, Pg.6, Vol.2, Maktaba Rasheediya, Queta, Baluchistan, Pakistan

¹⁵ Al Haawi Lil Fatawa, Pg.5, Vol.2, Maktaba Rasheediya, Queta, Baluchistan, Pakistan

It means that through the constant reciting of tasbeeh/ zikr on the beads and the fact that keeping the beads constantly reminded him to do tasbeehs, he was able to achieve closeness to Allah.

With these narrations and explanations, it can be clearly seen that the tasbeeh or the beads is not a bid'ah (innovation) and its use is approved in the Shariah. In fact, Imam As Suyotee has written, 'It has not been narrated from anyone from the predecessors or the latter day scholars (As Salaf Wal Khalaf) that one is prohibited from doing Dhikr with the Tasbeeh beads. In fact, most of them used to count the dhikr on the beads, and they did not consider it disliked.'¹⁶

About its use, it is narrated that Ali (R.A.) said, 'what a good reminder is the Subha', (i.e. the beads). (This narration has been narrated by Ad Daili in Musnad Al Firdaus with a sanad (narration) going directly to Ali (R.A.)).

¹⁶ Al Haawi Lil Fatawa, Pg.6, Vol.2, Maktaba Rasheediya, Queta, Baluchistan, Pakistan

It is therefore evident that many of the Sahabahs, great scholars and Jurists of the past have approved the use of the tasbeeh beads. In this regard, they have also stated, ‘Counting the tasbeeh/zikr on the fingers is more virtuous than using the Subha because of the Hadeeth of Ibn Amr (R.A.). However, it is stated that if the one doing the tasbeeh is not safe from making mistakes (in counting), then the Subha (the beads tasbeeh) is better’.¹⁷

¹⁷ Al Haawi Lil Fatawa, Pg.4, Vol.2, Maktaba Rasheediya, Queta, Baluchistan, Pakistan