

## **The 20 Rakats Taraweeh prayer is a Sunnah Muakkadah - Those who reject it, go against the Sunnah and the consensus of the Sahabah** رضى الله عنهم

It is related from Sayyidina Ibn Abbas رضي الله عنه: ‘The Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم would pray 20 Rakats and then witr in the month of Ramadhan.’ (Musnad ibn Abi Shaybah vol 2, p294/ Sunan Baihaqi vol 2, p496/ Tibraani Kabir vol 11, p393/ Musnad ibn Hameed p218)

Ibn Hajar Al Asqalani رحمه الله related from Imam Rafi رحمه الله: The Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم prayed 20 Rakats in Taraweeh on two consecutive nights with a congregation in Ramadhan. On the third night many more people gathered (for a congregation) but the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم did not appear before them. In the morning the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم stated: ‘It occurred to me that this prayer (20 Rakats in Ramadhan) could become compulsory (Fard) upon you, and you would not be able to bear it.’ This narration related by Hafiz Ibn Hajar Asqalani, after relating it, he used to state: (متفق على صحته) ‘There is a consensus amongst all the Muhadditheen that this narration is sound (Sahih).’ (Talkeesul Habeer Fe Takhreej Ahadith Rafi ul Kabeer vol 1, p119)

Sayyidina Abu Dhar Ghifari رضي الله عنه related: ‘We (the Companions) observed the fasts of Ramadhan with the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم. In the whole month the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم did not lead us in prayer, until there were 7 days left in the month. The Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم then led us in prayer on the 23<sup>rd</sup>, 25<sup>th</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup> night. (Abu Dawood vol 1, p195)

Sayyidah Aisha رضي الله عنها related: ‘After these nights (23, 25 & 27th) the congregation grew to a very large number on the 29<sup>th</sup> night. The Masjid of the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم had become filled to capacity. On this night the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم only came out to lead the people for the Fajr prayer. After the Fajr prayer, the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم stated: ‘I knew that you had gathered for the night prayer (Taraweeh) but I feared that this prayer would become compulsory (Fard) upon you and you would find it difficult to fulfil. (Bukhari vol 1, p269/ Muslim vol 1, p259)

Even in the days in which the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم did not pray in congregation, Ibn Abbas رضي الله عنه has related: Verily in the month of Ramadhan, The Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم used to pray 20 Rakats and Witr independent from any congregation. (Baihaqi As-Sunanul Kubra vol 2, p496)

Allamah Subqi Shafi’ رحمه الله stated: ‘Our belief is that the 20 Rakats Taraweeh is a Sunnah, which is proven from a sound chain.’ (Sharahul Minhaaj)

## **The ‘Ahle Sunnah Wal Jamat’ are those who are satisfied and content with the actions/teachings of the Sahabah** رضى الله عنهم

The soundness and correctness of the above narrations is supported by the very actions of the Sahabah رضي الله عنهم. It was the nature of the Sahabah رضي الله عنهم that without the order and permission of the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم they would not perform any religious action. They would not create innovative practices in the Deen. It is this very same 20 Rakats Taraweeh that has been performed from the time of the Sahabah رضي الله عنهم to the present day in congregation in the month of Ramadhan. This form of worship has been passed down from generation to generation and safeguarded to this day. The strength of these Ahadith is established from the Khulafa Rashideen and Sahabah رضي الله عنهم, Scholars of Hadith, Jurists and Mujtahideen of this Ummah, as well as the very practice of the Ummah itself.

The Hadith related in respect of the 20 Rakats Taraweeh above has been related by Ibn Abbas رضي الله عنه. Umar رضي الله عنه then acted upon this narration and ordered the Ummah to read 20 Rakats Taraweeh behind an Imam. Both of these Companions رضي الله عنهم are recognised as reliable and sound narrators of Hadith and on their narrating there is no doubt. It is the proven unanimous practice of the Sahabah رضي الله عنهم to act upon this narration of Ibn Abbas رضي الله عنه which authenticates this narration as a correct and accepted practise.

The Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم stated: ‘After my time, people will see much differences occurring. In such a condition, it is compulsory upon you that you hold firmly to my Sunnah and the rightly guided path of the Khulafa Rashideen.’ (Mishkaat Masabih p30)

The Prophet ﷺ specifically gave the Ummah an advice; related from Huzaifa رضي الله عنه. The Prophet ﷺ stated: ‘I do not know how long I will remain amongst you. After me, follow Abu Bakr رضي الله عنه and Umar رضي الله عنه. (Mishkaat Masabih p560)

Abu Rahman bin Abdul Qari رضي الله عنه related: I left one night in Ramadhan with Sayyidina Umar bin Khattab رضي الله عنه and we headed towards the Masjid of the Prophet ﷺ. In the Masjid we saw various groups of people praying alone or behind an Imam and they were scattered over the Masjid. Umar bin Khattab رضي الله عنه made a decision to congregate all the people behind Ubay Ibn Ka’ab رضي الله عنه. (Bukhari vol 1, p269)

Yazid bin Ruman رحمه الله related: In the time of the Khalifah of Sayyidina Umar bin Khattab رضي الله عنه people would pray 23 Rakats behind an Imam (20 Taraweeh, 3 Witr). (Muwatta Imam Malik vol 1, p98/ Sunan Kabeer Baihaqi vol 2, p496)

Abi Abdur Rahman Salmi رحمه الله related: In the nights of Ramadhan, Sayyidina Ali رضي الله عنه called upon the recitors of the Qur’an (Huffaz/Qura) and ordered one amongst them to lead the people in 20 Rakats of Taraweeh. Sayyidina Ali رضي الله عنه would lead the people himself in the Witr Salah. (Sunan Kabeer Baihaqi vol 2, p496/ Fathul Bari vol 4, p219)

Hafiz Ibn Taymiyyah رحمه الله writes in his Fatawa: ‘Verily it has been proven that Umar رضي الله عنه made Ubay ibn Ka’ab رضي الله عنه lead the people in 20 Rakats of Taraweeh and 3 Witr in Ramadhan. This is the way of the scholars of this Ummah and this is the Sunnah. This is due to the fact that Sayyidina Ubay Ibn Ka’ab رضي الله عنه read 20 Rakats Taraweeh in a large congregation of the Muhajireen and Ansar of the Sahabah رضي الله عنهم and none amongst them objected to this practice.’ (Fatawa Ibn Taymiyyah vol 1, p191/ Al Mughni vol 1, p803)

In the time of Hafiz Ibn Taymiyyah رحمه الله when the Rawafid (Shia) put the blame upon Sayyidina Umar رضي الله عنه for creating the innovated practice of 20 Rakats Taraweeh. Ibn Taymiyyah رحمه الله responded to this allegation by writing in defence of Sayyidina Umar رضي الله عنه to the Rawafid: ‘If Umar Farooq رضي الله عنه by establishing 20 Rakats of Taraweeh had been deemed to adopt a bad practise, then Sayyidina Ali رضي الله عنه would have put an end to this in his Khilafat. However, in the Khilafat of Ali رضي الله عنه, he too would read 20 Rakats Taraweeh prayer in Kufa. In the month of Ramadhan, Sayyidina Ali رضي الله عنه would state: ‘May Allah عزوجل enlighten the grave of Umar رضي الله عنه, just as He (Umar رضي الله عنه) has enlightened our Masajids for us.’ (Due to the fact of establishing the 20 Rakats Taraweeh for the Ummah.) (Minhaaj ul Sunnah vol 2, p224)

Those Ghair Muqalideen who accuse Umar رضي الله عنه for introducing the innovation of 20 Rakats Taraweeh in his Khilafat, ask yourselves this, are you not treading the same path with your words as the Rawafid (Shia) in the time of Ibn Taymiyyah رحمه الله?

This practise of 20 Rakats continued throughout the Khilafat of Uthman رضي الله عنه and Ali رضي الله عنه & remained unaltered in the entire world until today. Alham-du-lil-lah, this is practised still today in the holiest Masajid i.e. Masjid Haram Makkah, Masjid Nabwi صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم and Masjid al-Aqsa.

Sayyidina Abdullah Ibn Masood رضي الله عنه, who is one of the most senior Sahabah رضي الله عنهم in terms of knowledge and Taqwa, gave this advice to the Ummah in respect of the status of the Sahabah رضي الله عنهم, upon which we should reflect wholeheartedly: ‘Sayyidina Ibn Masood رضي الله عنه stated: if you wish to follow the way of anyone, then follow the path of the Sahabah رضي الله عنهم. These Sahabah رضي الله عنهم had pure hearts, depth of knowledge, were devoid of show and pomp, had simplicity and were the best people of this Ummah. Allah عزوجل preferred this great group of the Sahabah رضي الله عنهم for the company of his most beloved Prophet ﷺ and used them to establish his Deen. For this reason, their greatness should be recognised and their path followed, as truly they were those who were upon the rightly guided straight path.’ (Mishkaat Masabih, p32)

Asad bin Amr رحمه الله related from Qazi Imam Abu Yusuf رحمه الله: ‘I asked Imam Abu Hanifa رحمه الله about the matter of Taraweeh and what Sayyidina Umar رضى الله عنه had done in this respect. Imam Ahle Sunnah Wal Jamat Abu Hanifa رحمه الله replied: ‘20 Rakats of Taraweeh is Sunnah Muakkadah. Sayyidina Umar رضى الله عنه did not establish this from his own accord, nor was he one to create innovations in the Deen. Rather, he was the greatest in his hatred of innovation. The order that he gave for the 20 Rakats of Taraweeh, verily; there would have been an order of the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم in this respect.’ (Marakeeyul Farah Ma’a Hashiya p334)

Imam Ahle Sunnah Wal Jamat Ahmed bin Hanbal رحمه الله stated: ‘It has reached me that Umar bin Khattab رضى الله عنه would read 20 Rakats of Taraweeh.’ (Al Mughni vol 2, p168/ Baihaqi vol 1, p296/ Muwatta Imam Malik p40)

## **The Incorrect Evidence Provided by the Ghair Muqalideen for Establishing of 8 Rakats as Taraweeh**

Usually the narration of Aisha رضى الله عنها is used to support the view that Taraweeh of 8 Rakats is sufficient. Abu Salma رضى الله عنه related that he asked of Aisha رضى الله عنها: ‘How was the prayer of the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم in Ramadhan?’ She رضى الله عنها replied: ‘The Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم would not pray more than 11 Rakats in Ramadhan or outside of it.’ (Sahih Bukhari vol 1, p154)

In this narration, the words clearly state that the prayer of the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم throughout the whole year (in and outside of Ramadhan) would be no more than 11 Rakats. Therefore, this Hadith indicates the Prophet’s صلى الله عليه وسلم practice in respect of Tahajud, as Taraweeh is connected only to the nights of Ramadhan. Is Taraweeh read after Isha in the other months of the year apart from Ramadhan?

It is recorded in the Sahih Hadith that in the time of Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, He صلى الله عليه وسلم only prayed as Imam 3 nights in Ramadhan with the congregation of the Companions رضى الله عنهم. On the three nights when The Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم performed Taraweeh Salaah in congregation, He صلى الله عليه وسلم performed Tahajud Salaah alone on one of those nights. Anas رضى الله عنه related that the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم ‘In (one night of) Ramadhan was praying (Taraweeh) Salaah. A number of us including myself joined the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم in Salaah forming one Jamaat. Afterwards the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم upon completing the Salaah went to his room and performed that Salaah (Qiyam ul Layl Tahajud) alone which He صلى الله عليه وسلم did not perform with us. (Sahih Muslim vol 1, p352)

The Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم would pray Tahajud (Qiyam ul Layl) the whole year round, but never was there the same congregation as was found in the 3 days of Ramadhan (as mentioned above). Nor did the Khulafa Rashideen رضى الله عنهم gather and perform their own congregation. The Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم never led the congregation of the Companions رضى الله عنهم in Tahajud (Qiyam ul Layl). (Fatawa Rahimiyah vol 1, p331)

Why is the idea of Qiyam ul Layl in congregation in the Masjid than enforced as though it is a compulsory prayer. There are also posters put up to attract people to take part in this, reflect upon your own actions before implicating the Sahabah رضى الله عنهم!

If the above narration is not regarding the Tahajud prayer, then the Sahih narration of Ibn Hajar Asqalani رحمه الله mentioned above where the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم prayed 20 Rakats congregation on two consecutive nights in Ramadhan is conflicting to this narration of Aisha رضى الله عنها mentioning 11 Rakats in and outside of Ramadhan. Also, the narration of Aisha رضى الله عنها found in Bukhari has not mentioned a congregation of prayer. Where is the proof then for praying 8 Rakats Taraweeh with congregation in Ramadhan?

The establishment of 20 Rakats Taraweeh with congregation started upon the order of Umar رضى الله عنه and it was Umar رضى الله عنه also who established this 20 Rakats Taraweeh in the whole month.

On one side, the Ghair Muqalideen by implicating Sayyidina Umar رضى الله عنه, leave the prayer composing of 20 Rakats. Yet, they pray 8 Rakats for the entire month. Both their actions are without reason or proof as the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم only prayed 20 Rakats in 3 nights with congregation and He صلى الله عليه وسلم never prayed Tahajud (8 Rakats) in congregation.

The Ulama of Salaf-us-Saliheen **رحمهم الله** have left the Ummah **rules/regulations** on how best to interpret Ahadith: if in any narration the message is not completely understood or there are a number of conflicting opinions regarding the same topic it is essential to refer to the practices and recommendations of the Sahabah **رضى الله عنهم**, especially the actions of the Khulafa Rashideen **رضى الله عنهم** – ‘for you that is the true path’. (Fathul Bari Sharah Bukhari vol 2, p269 / Abu Dawood vol 1, p263 / Tareekh Baghdad vol 2, p247/ Ahkamul Qur’an vol 1, p17)

## **The supporting proof from the Scholars of the Ummah that the Narration of Aisha **رضى الله عنها** is in respect of Tahajud prayer**

Allamah Abu Bakr ibn Arabi **رحمه الله** writes: ‘the 11 Rakats (8 Rakats Nafil, 3 Witr) narration related by Aisha **رضى الله عنها** refers to the Qiyam ul Layl (Tahajud) of the Prophet **ﷺ**.’ (Aridatul Ah’wadhi Shara Tirmidhi vol 4, p19)

Ibn Hajar Al Asqalani **رحمه الله** also refers to this narration as referring to the Tahajud (8 Rakats) with Witr (3 Rakats). (Fathul Bari Sharah Bukhari vol 3, p328)

Qazi Ayadh Maliki **رحمه الله** has taken all of Aisha **رضى الله عنها** narrations as referring to the Tahajud prayer of the Prophet **ﷺ**, which He **ﷺ** would perform in Her house. (Sharah Muslim Nawawi vol 1, p253)

Qazi Mohammad Shawqani **رحمه الله** who himself was a Ghair Muqalid Aalim writes: ‘The narration of Aisha **رضى الله عنها** in Sahih Bukhari and Sahih Muslim referring to the 11 Rakats in and outside of Ramadhan is in respect of Tahajud Qiyam ul Layl. (Naylul Awtar vol 3, p39)

Shah Abdul Aziz Muhaddith Dehlawi **رحمه الله** states: ‘the narration of Aisha **رضى الله عنها** is in regards to Tahajud which whether it was Ramadhan or not the Prophet **ﷺ** would always perform. (Fatawa Azizia p125)

Shah Waliullah Muhaddith Dehlawi **رحمه الله** writes: ‘The 20 Rakats of Taraweeh is an ‘established continuous Sunnah’ (Sunnat Qai’mah Mutawatira) which has been practiced in its current form since the time of the 1<sup>st</sup> generation of Muslims (Salaf-us-Saliheen **رحمهم الله**) in a united manner. Specifically, for the view of the 4 Imams to agree upon a matter is one of the greatest proofs of it being an established Sunnah.’ (Hujatulahil Baligha vol 1, p412-3)

Verily 20 Rakats Taraweeh is Sunnah Muakkadah (an emphasized Sunnah) on both men and women. (Ad-Durrul Mukhtar. vol 1 p.520)

After all these narrations and sayings, an appeal is made to the Ghair Muqalideen to act upon the sayings and way shown by the Sahabah **رضى الله عنهم** and do not destroy your Akhirah by following another way. The actions of the Sahabah **رضى الله عنهم** are the actions of Rasulullah **ﷺ**.

There are others, who without having the mind-set of the Ghair Muqalideen, through laziness or are easily influenced read 8 Rakats of Taraweeh and leave. Why is this the case that due to laziness 20 Rakaat Taraweeh is neglected? Performing less than 20 Rakaat Taraweeh is a sin. These people are deprived of a very great worship of Ramadhan (not only in relation to Salah but also in the context of listening to Qur’an as established Sunnah) and lose out on the immense bounties and rewards to be presented on the Day of Qiyamah.

Mufti Mohammad Yusuf Danka

(Croydon Masjid & Islamic Centre)