Da'wah Wal Irshad Series 37

ITA
Islāmic Tarbiyah Academy

20 Rak'ãts Tarãweeh

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بِسۡمِ اللّٰہِ الرَّحۡمٰنِ الرَّحِیۡمِ

The primary objective of this concise treatise is to reassure individuals who have always performed 20 rak'ãts of Tarweeh who are now being confused by those who claim that 20 rak'ãts Tarãweeh is not established by the Sunnah.
20 Rak'ãts Tarãweeh is not a new concept; it is a Sunnah-based practise, thus one may be confident that they are following the Sunnah and do not need to reduce their Tarãweeh to just 8 rak'ãts.
In reality, this issue has only surfaced in the last century or so, since it was not a topic of discussion before that.

Shaykh Atiya Muhammad Sãlim (R) who held the post of a Judge in Madinatul Munawara and also a teacher at Masjidun Nabawi (ﷺ) has written a book (Tarãweeh more than a thousand years in the Masjid of the Prophet (ﷺ) in which, he has recounts the history of Tarãweeh Salãh in Masjidun Nabawi since the time of the Prophet (ﷺ) up to 1390H.
From his findings it is clear that for a period of over a thousand years Tarãweeh Salãh has never been less than 20 rak'ãts in Masjidun Nabawi (ﷺ). Having written the history for over a thousand years the author poses the question to the readers; "During this long period has Tarãweeh Salãh ever been restricted to 8 rak'ãts?, and have you ever found Tarãweeh Salãh performed less than 20 rakãts?"

If we assume that 8 rak'ãts Tarãweeh is correct, then it means that the entire Ummah was deviated for all these centuries and were performing 20 rak'ãts without any Shar'i proof.

Tarãweeh in the era of Rasulullah (ﷺ)
The reason why there are no authentic and direct reports from the Messenger (ﷺ) concerning the number of rak'ats in Tarãweeh, is that the Messenger (ﷺ) performed the prayer in congregation for a few days only, after which he performed Tarãweeh in the confines of his home. Hence, many of the companions (R.A.) did not observe him performing the prayer. Thereafter, the prayer continued to be performed

individually or in small groups until the time of 'Umar (R.A.), when he appointed an Imãm to lead everyone in twenty rak'ats. Thus, it came to be performed as twenty rak'ats in a large congregation. The few companions fortunate enough to have observed it with Allah's Messenger (ﷺ) in congregation did not voice any objection to the decision of 'Umar (R.A.). If the Messenger (ﷺ) had performed more or less than twenty rak'ats on any of the nights during Ramadhãn, these companions would surely have refuted 'Umar's (R.A.) decision for establishing Tarãweeh as twenty rak'ats.

It is reported from Aisha (R.A.) that Rasulullah (ﷺ) performed Salãh one night in the Masjid. A group of Sahãbah followed him in his Salãh. Thereafter Rasulullah (ﷺ) performed Salãh the following night and the number of people increased. Thereafter they gathered in the third or fourth night but Rasulullah (ﷺ) did not go out to them. When Rasulullah (ﷺ) went out in the morning he said: "I had seen what you had done. The only thing that prevented me from coming out to you was that I feared that it (the Salãh at night in Ramadhãn) would be made compulsory upon you. This was in Ramadhãn (Bukhãri vol.1, pg.152).
The above Hadith clearly indicates that Tarãweeh Salãh with Jama'ah in the month of Ramadhãn is originally the Sunnat of Rasulullah (ﷺ) and the only reason that Rasulullah (ﷺ) curtailed this practice was due to the fear that it might be made compulsory (fardh) upon the Ummah.

Tarãweeh after the demise of Rasulullah (ﷺ)

It is reported from Abu Hurairah (R.A.) that Rasulullah (ﷺ) said: "Whosoever stands up (in Salãh) in Ramadhãn with faith and hoping for reward, all his previous sins would be forgiven." Ibn Shihãb (R) said: "Thereafter Rasulullah (ﷺ) passed away and the matter was like that (this means that everyone would stand up in Ramadhãn in the mentioned period whichever way he wished until Umar (R.A.) gathered them - as explained by Allamah Kirmãni (R) in his commentary). Thereafter the matter was like that in the Khilãfat of Abu Bakar (R.A.) and the initial stages of the Khilãfat of Umar (R.A.). It is reported from

Ibn Shihãb who reports from Urwah bin Zubair (R.A.) who reports from Abdur Rahman ibn Abdul Qãri that he said: "I came out with Umar bin Khattab (R.A.) one night in Ramadhãn to the Masjid. The scene that met us was that the people were in different groups. One person performed Salãh on his own. One person performed Salãh and a small group followed him. Umar (R.A.) then said: "Verily I feel that if I gather these people behind one Qãri it would be best. Thereafter he (Umar R.A.) made up his mind and gathered them behind Ubay bin Ka'b (R.A.). Then on another night I went out with him (Umar R.A.) and the people were performing Salãh behind their Qãri. Umar (R.A.) said: "What an excellent innovation this is. And the one (Salãh) they sleep upon (i.e. they sleep after performing it as explained by Allamah Kirmãni (R) in his commentary on Bukhari vol.9 pg.154) is more virtuous then the one they stand up for." He meant (the prayer) in the last part of the night. And the people used to stand up in the early part of the night.
From the above we learn that in the era of Rasulullah (ﷺ), the Khilafat of Abu Bakar (R.A.) and the initial stages of the Khilafat of Umar (R.A.) the general method of performing Tarãweeh was to perform it in small groups or individually. Umar (R.A.) was the one who initiated the practice of gathering everyone behind one Imãm.

Following the Sunnah of the Khulafah Rãshideen is in accordance to the command of Rasulullah (ﷺ). Imãm Tirmizi (R) narrates the following Hadith in Tirmizi in the section Abwãbul Ilm (chapters of knowledge) under the chapter - Chapter on holding firmly onto the Sunnah and Abstaining from Bid'ah.
Irbãd bin Sãriya (R.A.) narrates: "Rasulullah (ﷺ) preached to us one day after Fajar with utmost eloquence which caused the eyes to tear and the hearts to tremble. A man then said: "Definitely this is the advice of a person bidding farewell, hence what do you emphatically command us with O Messenger of Allah? He (Rasulullah (ﷺ) said: "I emphatically command you with the fear of Allah and the listening and obedience even (if your leader be) an Abyssinian slave. Verily who lives from amongst you will observe such dissension. Save yourself from newly invented matters because it is definitely misguidance. Whosoever

reaches that era from amongst you then my Sunnah and Sunnah of the rightly guided Khulafa is mandatory upon him. Bite upon it (the Sunnah) with the molars (Tirmizi vol.2 pg.92).

Further evidence mentioning 20 Rak'ãts Tarãweeh:

Yazid ibn Khusayfa (R) narrates Sa'ib ibn Yazid (R) as saying**:** "They would perform twenty rak'ãts Tarãweeh during the month of Ramadhãan in the time of 'Umar (R.A.), and they would recite the chapters containing a hundred or so verses; and during the time of 'Uthman ibn 'Affãn (R.A.) they would lean on their staffs from standing (for so long)." (Sunan al-Bayhaqi 2:296)

The narrators of this hadeeth have all been rigorously approved as 'Allama Nimawi (R) confirms in his Athar al-Sunan. This hadeeth is clear evidence that twenty rak'ãts were observed during the time of 'Umar (R.A.) as well as during the time of 'Uthman (R.A.).

2) Yazid ibn Ruman (R) relates: "The people would perform twenty-three rak'ãts during Ramadhãn in the time of 'Umar (R.A.)." (Sunan al-Bayhaqi 2:496, Muwatta Imãm Mãlik 1:71)

Although this is a rigorously authenticated hadeeth, it is mursal, or one with a broken chain. However, this does not alter is effectiveness for a number of reasons:

By consensus of the hadeeth scholars, mursal narrations can used as evidence.

b) This is a hadeeth narrated by Imãm Mãlik (R), and it is an established fact that the mursal narrations of Imãm Mãlik (R) in his Muwatta rank alongside the his mawsul narrations (i.e. those with unbroken chains).

c) There are many other mursal and mawsul narrations which strengthen this one.

d) Shah Waliyullah (R) writes that Imãm Shafi'ee (R) said: "The most authentic book after the Qur'ãn is the Muwatta of Imãm Mãlik (R), and the hadeeth scholars are unanimous that all its narrations are authentic according to the judgment of (Imãm) Mãlik (R), and all its mursal narrations reach the Messenger (ﷺ) in some way or another."(Hujjatullah al-Bãligha 1:106)

3) Yahya ibn Sa'id (R) narrates that: 'Umar ibn al-Khattab (R) appointed an Imãm to lead them in twenty rak'ãts." (Musannaf Ibn Abi Shayba 2:393)

4) Abd al-Aziz ibn Rafi' (R) narrates that, Ubay ibn Ka'b (R.A.) would lead the congregation in twenty rak'ãts in Madinah during Ramadhãn, followed by three (rak'ãts) Witr**.** (Musannaf Ibn Abi Shayba 2:393)

5) Ata (R) reports: "I found the people observing twenty-three rak'ãts, which included witr." (Musannaf Ibn Abi Shayba 3:393)

6) Abu Khusayb (R) narrates: Suwayd ibn Ghafala (R) would lead them in prayer during the month of Ramadhãan. He would perform five tarweehas (sets of four rak'ãts) - twenty rak'ãts (in all). (Sunan al-Bayhaqi 2:496)

7) Nafi' ibn 'Umar (R) narrates that, Ibn Abi Mulayka (R) would lead them in twenty rak'ãts prayer during Ramadhãn. (Musannaf Ibn Abi Shayba 2:393)

8) Sa'id ibn 'Ubayd (R) narrates that, 'Ali ibn Rabi'ah (R) would lead them in five tarweehas (i.e. twenty rak'ãts) and three witr during Ramadhãn. **(**Musannaf Ibn Abi Shayba 2:393)

9) Ibn Abbãs (R.A.) relates: "The Messenger (ﷺ) would perform twenty rak'ãts during Ramadhãn and three rak'ãts witr." (Musannaf Ibn Abi Shayba 2:394)
This hadeeth may be weak since a narrator in its chain, Abu Shayba Ibrahim ibn 'Uthman, has received some criticism. However, as mentioned earlier, since the Ummah has adopted the same number of rak'ãts for the greater part of history, it will not be totally rejected but rather used as supplementary evidence.

10) It has been narrated from Shutayr ibn Shakl (R) (a companion of 'Ali-R.A.) that, He would lead them during the month of Ramadhãn in twenty rak'ãts (tarãweeh) and three rak'ats witr. (Sunan al-Bayhaqi 4:496)

11) Muhammad ibn Ka'b al-Qurazi (R) says, The people would perform twenty rak'ãts in the month of Ramadhãn during the khilafat of 'Umar (R.A.). They would lengthen the recitation and perform three rak'ãts witr. (Qiyam al-Layl 91)

12) A'mash (R) reports that 'Abdullah ibn Mas'ood (R.A.) would perform twenty rak'ãts (tarãweeh) and three rak'ãts witr. (Qiyam al-Layl 91)
All of these reports mention the rak'ãts of Tarãweeh as being twenty and no less.

Usually the narration of A'isha (R.A.) is used to support the view that Tarãweeh of 8 Rak'ãts is sufficient. Abu Salma related that he asked A'isha : 'How was the prayer of the Prophet (ﷺ) in Ramadhãn?' She replied: 'The Prophet (ﷺ) would not pray more than 11 Rak'ãts in Ramadhãn or outside of it.' (Sahih Bukhãri vol 1, p154).
In this narration, the words clearly state that the prayer of the Prophet (ﷺ) throughout the whole year (in and outside of Ramadhãn) would be no more than 11 Rak'ãts. Therefore, this Hadith indicates the Prophet's (ﷺ) practice in respect of Tahajjud.
Ibn Hajar Al Asqalani (R) also refers to this narration as referring to the Tahajjud (8 Rak'ãts) with Witr(3 Rak'ãts). (Fathul Bãri Sharah Bukhari vol 3, p328)

Finally, from the time of Umar (R.A.) until recently, the entire Ummah performed 20 Rak'ãt or more. Any Hadith scholar cannot deny that Umar's (R.A.) command or tacit approval led to the establishment of 20 Rak'ãts.
In fact, individuals who choose to perform only eight rak'ãts should examine their hearts; it should not be since they are lazy in worship that they pick less rak'ãts.

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