



The Differences In The Prayer (Salah) of Men and Women

﴿ صلاة المرأة ، أن المرأة ليست في ذلك كالرجل ﴾

عن يزيد بن أبي حبيب أن رسول الله صلى الله عليه مر على امرأتين تصليان فقال إذا سجدتما فضع بعض اللحم إلى الأرض أن المرأة ليست في ذلك كالرجل- السنن الكبرى للبيهقي ج:2، ص223/ السلسيل في معرفة الدليل ص119/ مصنف ابن أبي شيبة ج:1، ص269

Allah ﷻ says: 'He That Obeys Allah and His Rasul (ﷺ), has already attained The Great Victory'. (Surah 33, v71)

There are many ways in which the prayers of both men and women differ which are proven from Saheeh Ahadith. For example:

1. For men there is increased reward in praying in the 1st row of the congregational prayers. However, this is not the case with women. (**Sahih Bukhari and Sunnan Abu Dawood**)
2. Sayyidah Aisha ﷺ relates: RasulAllah ﷺ stated; 'The prayer of a woman who does not adorn herself with the Hijab (covering in accordance to Shari'ah) is not accepted' (**Jami Tirmidi and Abu Dawood**). However, this is not the case for menfolk.
3. In the Hadith books of both Sahih Muslim and Sahih Bukhari, RasulAllah ﷺ has expressed severe displeasure with those men of the Ummah who habitually fail to attend the five daily prayers in congregation in the Masjid (**Saheeh Bukhari vol 1, p89**). However, Sayyidah Umme Humaid ﷺ, a female Companion, requested RasulAllah ﷺ permission to allow her to pray with him ﷺ in congregation in Masjid Nabwi, stating that her husband prevented her from doing so. RasulAllah ﷺ replied: 'Perform the prayer in the inner most portion of your house, it is better than reading the congregational prayer behind me (in my Masjid). Because of this advice, Sayyidah Umme Humaid ﷺ for the remainder of her life performed her Salah in the inner most portion of her house. (**Sunnan Tibrani, Majma'ul Zawahid, Musnad Ahmed**)
4. In Salah, if the Imam makes a mistake; it is mentioned in the Hadith that the men should proclaim 'SubhanAllah'. However, for women it is mentioned that they should clap on hand one top of the other (on their chest) to inform the Imam of his mistake. (**Sunan Nisai #1212**)
5. It is related in the Ahadith where men are to tie their hands in Salah either above or below the navel, in relation to women, it is unanimous amongst the Ulama that the hands should be placed on their chest during Qiyam (standing) in Salah. (**As-Sa'ayah vol 2, p156, by Shaykh Abul Hasanat Mufti Abdul Hay Lucknowi**)
6. When the Salah would be completed in the time of the Prophet ﷺ, it was habitual for the women to quickly rush off to their homes. In this time following the Salah, the men would sit and perform Du'a and Dhikr and then return home (leaving enough time for the women to clear). (**Sahih Bukhari, ch-Kitabul Salah/ Sunnan Abu Dawood #1027**) It is strange and unfortunate that in the Masajid today, upon the completion of Salah the men quickly rush for the exits without the performance of Du'a or Dhikr as was the habit of the Prophet ﷺ.

There is no Saheeh Marfo'a Hadith (صحيح مرفوع حديث) that indicates that there is no difference in performance of Salah between the men and women in every way. Now we will show our proofs in which the prayer of men and women differ (in their performance) from four sources. Namely, the orders of the Prophet of Allah ﷺ, The opinions of the Sahabah ﷺ, The opinions of the learned amongst the Tabi'een, The opinions of the four Imams of the Ummah.

The Hadith of the Messenger of Allah (صلى الله عليه وسلم):

1. The order of the Prophet of Allah ﷺ which has been recorded by Imam Abu Dawood رحمه الله in his 'Kitabul Maraseel' narrating from Sayyidina Ibn Abi Habib ﷺ that on one occasion RasulAllah ﷺ passed by two women who were both engaged in prayer (Salah). RasulAllah ﷺ stated: 'When you (women) prostrate, then join your body with the ground. Verily, in this matter (procedure of performing Salah) a woman is not like a man.' (**Page 8, Abu Dawood Kitabul Maraseel, As Sunnan al Kubra Baihaqi vol 2, p223**)
2. Sayyidina Wail ibn Hujr ﷺ narrates that; RasulAllah ﷺ told me: 'When you commence your prayer raise both your hands level with your ears, and the women should raise their hands to their chests.' (**Kanzul Amaal, Majma'ul Zawahid/ 98**)
(تنوير الحوالك شرح مؤطا أمام مالك للسيوطي ج:1، ص98)

Imam Bukhari رحمه الله has narrated in 'Juz Raful Yad'ain' (The Chapter of Raising the Hands) about Sayyidah Umme Darda رضي الله عنها that in her prayer she would raise her hands to her shoulders.

3. Sayyidina Ibn Umar رضي الله عنه relates: RasulAllah ﷺ stated: 'When a woman sits during prayer she should place one thigh on top of the other, and when she prostrates she should join her stomach with her thighs, this manner is more concealing. Allah ﷻ on seeing her says 'O Angels! Bear witness that I have forgiven this woman.' (Sunnan Baihaqi, vol 2, p223)
4. Sayyidina Abu Saeed Khudri رضي الله عنه relates: RasulAllah ﷺ used to order the men- 'Spread your body when prostrating'. And he ﷺ would order the women 'Gather your bodies when prostrating'. (Baihaqi, vol 2, p222)

The Rulings of the Sahabah (رضى الله عنهم):

عن علي رضي الله تعالى عنه قال إذا سجدت المرأة فلتتقرو لتضم فخذتها - مصنف ابن أبي شيبة ج: 1 ص: 269

1. Sayyidina Ali رضي الله عنه stated: 'When a woman prostrates, she should gather her body and join her thighs together.' (Ibn Abi Shayba vol 1, p269)
2. Sayyidina Abdullah Ibn Abbas رضي الله عنه was asked about prayer as performed by women. He replied: 'Women should prostrate by gathering their body and joining its parts.' (Ibn Abi Shayba vol 1, p269)

The Rulings of the Tabi'een (رضى الله عنهم):

عن إبراهيم قال إذا سجدت المرأة فلتلزم بطنها بفخذها ولا ترفع عجزتها ولا تجافي كما يجافي الرجل - مصنف ابن أبي شيبة ج: 1 ص: 269-270

1. Ibrahim Nakahai رحمه الله stated: 'When a woman prostrates then she should stick her stomach to her thighs and should not raise her posterior. She should not spread herself out like the men.' (Ibn Abi Shayba vol 1, p269-270)
2. Hasan Basri رحمه الله stated: 'A woman will join (her body parts) and gather herself when prostrating.' (Ibn Abi Shayba vol 1, p269)
3. Mujahid رحمه الله stated: 'It is disliked (مكروه) that a man should join his stomach with his thighs whilst praying, in the manner of the women.' (Ibn Abi Shayba vol 1, p269)

The Rulings of the 4 Imams of the Ummah (رضى الله عنهم):

1. Imam Noman bin Thabit Abu Hanifa رحمه الله :

'A woman will gather herself when prostrating, she will stick her stomach and thighs together because this method is more 'concealing' for her (which is understood from the proofs of the Ahadith above).' (Hidayah vol 1, p110)

2. Imam 'Darul Hijrat' Malik bin Anas رحمه الله : - whose school of thought's foundation was based on the practices of the people of Madinah Munawwarah in his time.

'The men will separate the knees, the elbows and the thighs from the stomach during prostration in prayer. However, a woman should gather all these parts together.' (Al Sharhul Saghir, vol 1, p328)

3. Imam Muhammed bin Idress Al Shafi رحمه الله states: 'Allah ﷻ and His Prophet ﷺ has shown the women the manner in which to conceal themselves. And I, Imam Shafi رحمه الله, prefer that women join one part of their body with the other during the prostration in prayer. In the same way a woman should do so in Qiyam and Ruku (keep the body parts joined and close together). And women should keep their coverings loose and open so that the shape of the body is not apparent.' (Kitabul Umm vol 1, p100)

4. Imam Ahmed bin Hambal رحمه الله :

The well known books of the Hambali Fiqh 'Zad'ul Mustakna' and 'Al Mughni' have recorded: Imam Ahmed رحمه الله stated: 'Women should not spread out when performing the prostration during prayer. The reason being that they are ordered to be concealed and they should therefore gather their bodies together in the prostration, they should place their feet towards the right side whilst prostrating (by doing this, it allows the body to be closer to the ground)...it is also related from Sayyidina Ali رضي الله عنه and Abdullah ibn Umar رضي الله عنه that they ordered that women should gather their bodies together in prayer. (Al Mughni by Ibn Qadama vol 1, p562)

(صَلُّوا كَمَا رَأَيْتُمُونِي أُصَلِّي) A Hadith 'Pray as you have seen me praying' Misquoted, Misunderstood and Misrepresented:

It is unfortunate that in the present age the new groups from amongst the Muslims have taken a small portion of a Hadith, without relating or understanding the purpose of the whole Hadith in context. In the manner that we have explained above, there are many narrations, actions of the Companions of the Prophet ﷺ and the pious predecessors (Salafus Saliheen) which mention the differences in the performance of the prayer by men and women. There are clear differences indicated in the manner in which; Ruku (bowing), Sujood (prostrating) and Q'aida (sitting) are performed. Even outside of Salah, a woman performs these actions in a concealed manner out of modesty, this is the message of the Ahadith mentioned above. Women that act as men do in public are usually called immodest. Due to

the Hadith 'Pray as you have seen me pray' being misquoted, we have quoted the entire Hadith below to show to whom the Prophet ﷺ was referring to (in terms of male or female in Arabic grammar) and in what context. This Hadith is found in Saheeh and Sunnan Ahadith books:

Abu Qalaba stated: Sayyidina Malik (bin Huwairith al Laythi ؓ d:74H) narrated: We came to the Prophet ﷺ and we were young men nearly of equal ages and we stayed with him for twenty nights. Allah's Apostle ﷺ was a very kind man and when he realized our longing for our families, he ﷺ asked us about those whom we had left behind. When we informed him, he ﷺ said, "Go back to your families and stay with them and teach them (religion) and order them (to do good deeds). The Prophet ﷺ mentioned things some of which I remembered and some I did not. Then he ﷺ said, "Pray as you have seen me praying, and when it is the time of prayer, one of you should pronounce the call (Adhan) for the prayer and the eldest of you should lead the prayer." (Sahih Bukhari, ch.18- Kitabul Adhan #631/ Sahih Bukhari, ch.27-Kitabul Adaab/ Masnad Ahmad, ch.5/ Sunnan Darami ch.42)

It should also be noted that in this Hadith the Prophet ﷺ advises the two travelling Companions who spent a short time in Madinah, who are returning home. They would not have been able to learn all the laws and rulings of Islam and thus were given simple guidance to pray as they had seen the Prophet ﷺ pray in the Masjid for those 20 days. From the above Hadith it is clear that the two Companions who were travelling were men. In the context of Arabic grammar (صلّوا كما رأيتموني أصلى - رواه الصحيح البخارى) the phases used are directed to men and not women. The Hadith mentioned earlier above with the instruction of the Prophet ﷺ to the women praying shows what is required of them in performing prayer. To take the Hadith: 'Pray as you have seen me pray, one of you should pronounce the call (Adhan) for the prayer and the eldest of you should lead the prayer' to refer to both men and women is nothing but ignorance of the purpose of the Hadith and the use of Arabic grammar. In addition to the fact that the Ulama throughout the ages have been unanimous with reference to the calling of Adhan, Iqamah and establishing congregational Salah is necessary for the men only.

Remember, in the previous generations if a statement of a scholar is found referring to the Salah of men and women being the same, it does not necessarily refer to the entire performance of Salah; it could be understood to be: the number of Rakats, timings etc. There is no difference in these. However the difference in specific actions performed by men and women in Salah has been made clear from narrations above.

We pray that Allah ﷻ grants our women the ability to understand and act upon what has been narrated from the Prophet ﷺ and the Salaf As Saliheen, آمين !

والله وحده هو المسؤول والمستعان وهو الهادي إلى سبل الخير والسلام .
مفتى محمد يوسف دُنكا (عفاله عنه)

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