

# TWENTY RAKA'AT OF TARAWEEH IS SUNNAH

## *By Sheikhul Hadith Hazrat Moulana Fazlur Rahman Saheb*

Sheikh Atiyyah Muhammed Salim who is a judge of the supreme court of Madinah Munawwarah and an orator and teacher in Masjidun-Nabawi (Ala Sahibihi As-Salatu Was-Salam) has written a book entitled *At-Taraweehu akthara min alfi amin fi masjid-in-Nabi* (Ala Sahibihi As-Salatu Was-Salam) in which he has recorded the history of taraweeh for more than a thousand years in Masjidun Nabawi (Ala Sahibihi As-Salatu Was-Salam). He has recorded the historical events dating from the era of Nabi Sallallahu alaihi wasallam right up to 1390 Hijrah. From his writings it is ascertained that during this lengthy period, taraweeh salaah was never less than twenty raka'at in Masjidun-Nabawi (Ala Sahibihi As-Salatu Was-Salam). The practice and norm was either twenty raka'at or more (never less than that). After recording the historical facts till page 151 of his book, Sheikh Attiyyah poses a question to the readers. During this lengthy period, were eight raka'at the maximum limit or were less than twenty raka'at ever performed?! For fourteen hundred years, the Taraweeh salaah was between twenty and forty raka'at. It was never heard from any person possessing Imaan, that to perform more than eight raka'at is not permissible.

Before that in 1376 Hijrah, a renowned scholar of hadith of India, Moulana Habibur Rahman Azmi wrote a book entitled "Rakat-e-Taraweeh" in which he writes:

"The pandemonium that the Ghair Muqallideen (a sect that does not follow any Imam or school of thought) of India had started for the past hundred years or so was never heard of before. Throughout the Islamic world, twenty raka'at or more were being performed. Similarly, from the time of Umar Radiallahu anhu till the time of this uproar, there was no masjid in the world where eight raka'at of Taraweeh used to be performed, which implies that for approximately twelve hundred and fifty years, all the Muslims (Ahlu Sunnah) used to regard twenty raka'at or more than twenty raka'at as Sunnah and worthy of being practiced upon. After such a long period, this sect has made a new manifestation that up to now what the Muslims were doing was incorrect. The correct version is only eight raka'at. Thereafter Moulana Habibur Rahman Azmi discusses from the books of hadith with references regarding what transpired during these twelve hundred and fifty years. He states that the practice of the Muslims (of twenty raka'at Taraweeh) is not contrary to hadith, but rather is in conformity to the Sunnah of Rasulullah Sallallahu alaihi wasallam and the rightly guided Khulafa (Radiallahu anhum).

Sheikh Atiyyah, in a similar manner, has proven the performance of twenty raka'at from history and the hadith. He has also quoted from the books of the four Imams (Abu Hanifa, Malik, Shafi and Ahmad Rahmatullah alaihim) and has subsequently quoted the following authentic hadith:

"Hold steadfast unto my Sunnah and the Sunnah of the rightly guided Khulafaa (i.e. Abu Bakr, Umar, Uthman and Ali Radiallahu anhum' (Mishkat p.30)

The fact of the matter is that during the time of Umar Radiallahu anhu, when the performance of Taraweeh salaah was systemized, then it is possible that initially eleven or thirteen raka'at were sometimes performed in which the qira'ah (recitation) of the Quran uses to be very long. Thereafter, twenty one or twenty three raka'at were performed. This practice of (twenty three) then continued right up to the eras of both Uthman and Ali Radiallahu anhum and also remained after them.

This was the practice of the entire world until the innovation of the "Ghair Muqallideen".

The people of Makkah Mukarramah used to perform Tawaaf after every four raka'at of Taraweeh and they used to perform the two raka'at of Tawaaf as well. Hence the people of Madinah also began performing an additional four raka'at after every four raka'at of Taraweeh. In this manner, an additional sixteen raka'at were added to the twenty raka'at making it a total of thirty six raka'at. This practice also remained for a while. Nevertheless, less than twenty raka'at were never performed.

Seikh Atiyyah states:

"The practice of Rasulullah Sallallahu alaihi wasallam of performing thirteen raka'at as narrated by Ibn Abbas Radiallahu anhu, the six raka'at after the Esha salaah and the two raka'at with which Rasulullah Sallallahu alaihi wasallam used to commence the Salat-ul-layl as narrated by Hazrat Aisha Radiallahu anha, makes a total of twenty one raka'at. This is why Umar Radiallahu anhu instructed

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Ubay Bin Ka'b Radiallahu anhu to perform twenty one raka'at for the people. Thus its (twenty one raka'at) proof exists in this hadith. It is not merely the opinion of Umar Umar Radiallahu anhu. (p.22)

This humble servant (Moulana Fazlur Rahman) states that even if the proof of twenty one or twenty three raka'at is not from any Marfu hadith (i.e. narration containing the actual speech of Nabi Sallallahu alaihi wasallam) and is only based on the view of Umar Umar Radiallahu anhu, then also, to adhere to it will be regarded as Sunnah because Rasulullah Sallallahu alaihi wasallam ordered us to adhere to the ways of the rightly guided Khulafaa. Thus to adhere to it in actual fact is to practice on a Marfu hadith.

It is reported on the authority of Ibn Abba Umar Radiallahu anhu that during the month of Ramadhaan, Rasulullah Sallallahu alaihi wasallam used to perform twenty raka'at and thereafter perform the witr salaah. (Baihaqi's Assunanul Kubra, vol.2, p. 496 etc).

Saib Bin Yazid Radiallahu anhu states that during the time of Umar Radiallahu anhu, the people used to perform twenty raka'at of Taraweeh, The same is also reported from Yazid Bin Ruman (Ibid).

Abdul Aziz Bin Rafai Radiallahu anhu mentions that Ubay Bin Ka'b Radiallahu anhu used to perform twenty raka'at for the people and thereafter three raka'at of witr. (Athaus Sunan, p.253).

Ubay Bin Ka'b Radiallahu anhu reports that Umar Radiallahu anhu instructed him saying that if he lead the salaah, it would be better. Thereafter he said, "Perform twenty raka'at for the people." (Athaus Sunan, p.255).

There are many more narrations proving this. Abdullah bin Masood Radiallahu anhu also used to perform twenty raka'at (Tuhfatul Ahwazi, vol.2, p.75).

Ali Radiallahu anhu performed twenty raka'at during the era of Uthman Radiallahu anhu (Sunan Baihaqi). Ali Radiallahu anhu called the Qurra (experts in the recital of the Quran) and instructed one of them to perform twenty raka'at for the people and Ali Radiallahu anhu himself used to perform the witr (Ibid).

In Makkah Mukarramah, the general practice was twenty raka'at during the time of Ata Rahmatullah alaihi. His demise was in 114 Hijrah. (Musannaf Ibn Abi Shaibah, vol.2, p. 393).

Similarly, Ibn Abi Mulaikah used to perform twenty raka'at of Taraweeh in Ramadhaan. The performance of twenty raka'at is proven from many of the Sahaba Radiallahu anhum and Tabi'een and it is the consensus of the majority of the Ummah. For more details on this subject and discussion regarding the chain of narrators, refer to Raka'at-e-Taraweeh of Muhaddith-e-Jaleel Allamah Habibur Rahman Azmi Rahmatullah alaih.

A few people prove eight raka'at of Taraweeh by presenting the hadith of Aisha Radiallahu anha in which she says: "The night salaah of Rasulullah Sallallahu alaihi wasallam in Ramadhaan and out of Ramadhaan should not exceed eleven raka'at. The answer to the above is that this hadith refers to Tahajjud salaah and not to Taraweeh salaah, as in this narration, mention is made of such a salaah which is performed in Ramadhaan and out of the month of Ramadhaan, whereas Taraweeh is only performed in Ramadhaan. Thus this hadith refers to Tahajjud and not Taraweeh. Hafiz Ibn Hajar Rahmatullah alaih, commentator of Sahih Bukhari, has also linked this hadith to Tahajjud salaah.

Similarly, in Sahih Bukhari (p.156) a hadith of Aisha Radiallahu anha is recorded wherein it is reported that besides the two raka'at sunnah of Fajr, Rasulullah Sallallahu alaihi wasallam used to perform thirteen raka'at (at night). Thus this implies that Rasulullah Sallallahu alaihi wasallam should not only confine it to eleven raka'at (as mentioned in the previous hadith). Hence, in the light of this hadith also, it will not be correct to confine the Taraweeh salaah to eight raka'at only. Imam Bukhari Rahmatullah alaih has also not confined the Taraweeh salaah to eight raka'at in any of his writings.

Note: Taraweeh is Sunnah Mu'akkadah (an emphasized Sunnah) on both men and women. (Ad-Durrul Mukhtar vol. 21, p.520).