

Q.1: What does 'Etikaaf' mean?

A. 'Etikaaf means to stay in mosque for a certain time with the pure intention of worship or of seeking proximity, nearness of Allah Almighty.

Q.2: What are the prerequisites of 'Etikaaf?

A. There are some prerequisites of 'Etikaaf (retirement to mosque for a certain time): (1). Intention. If one stays in a mosque without the intention of 'Etikaaf will not earn its reward, (2). One must be Muslim and (3). Sane, if one is not in his senses he will not earn the reward of 'Etikaaf, (4). Stay in such mosque where Imaam and Muazzin are posted, (5). To be free from seminal pollution. It is unlawful for "Junbi" (seminally or sexually polluted man) to enter a mosque, (6). For woman: to be free from "Haiz-o-Nifaas" (menstruation and discharge of blood of the child-birth) and (7). Fasting. If one observes 'Etikaaf of vow.

Q.3: Is maturity a prerequisite for 'Etikaaf or not?

A. Maturity is no condition for 'Etikaaf. An immature boy able to differentiate between the good and bad can observe 'Etikaaf in mosque.

Q.4: Is it conditional for one or not to observe 'Etikaaf in Jaama' Masjid?

A. Jaama' Masjid (principal mosque of the locality) is no condition for 'Etikaaf. It can be observed in "Masjid-e-Jama'at" (a mosque where Imaam and Muazzin are posted) even though congregation is not regularly held five times a day. However, 'Etikaaf can be observed in every mosque irrespective of permanent Imaam and Muazzin or congregational prayer.

Q.5: In which mosque is observance of 'Etikaaf highly rewarding?

A. Observance of 'Etikaaf in "Masjid-e-Haram Shareef" (the holy Ka'bah) earns one the highest reward (of all mosques under the sun) and then (in descending order) in "Masjid-e-Nabvi" (the Holy Prophet's mosque), "Masjid-e-Aqsa" (Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem) and then that one where large number of Muslims offer congregational prayer.

Q.6: Can a woman observe 'Etikaaf in mosque or not?

A. It is "Makrooh" (odious) for a woman to observe 'Etikaaf in mosque. She must observe it in her house at the place she has reserved for offering prayer which is called "Masjid-e-Bait" (the place reserved for prayer at home). It is "Mustahab" (commendable) for women to reserve a place in their houses for prayer and keep it clean and tidy. It is better if this place is a little raised from the ground

(level) like a platform. It is also better for men to offer their Nafil prayers at home for which a place should be reserved.

Q.7: How many kinds of 'Etikaaf are there?

A. 'Etikaaf is of three kinds i.e. (1). "Waajib". One makes "Mannat" (vow) of 'Etikaaf uttering the words of vow. Mere intention will not make 'Etikaaf due, (2). "Sunnat-e-Muakkadah". It must be observed during the last ten days of Ramadaan and (3). 'Etikaaf other than the above-mentioned two kinds which one wants to observe are "Mustahab" and "Sunnat-e-Ghair Muakkadah".

Q.8: What is the method of observing Ramadaan's 'Etikaaf?

A. One (fasting man) should enter the mosque on 20th of Ramadaan at the time of sunset (before the Azaan of Maghrib prayer) with the pure intention of 'Etikaaf and stay there till the end of Ramadaan i.e. leave the mosque after Maghrib of 30th Ramadaan or if the Moon of Eid is sighted on 29th as the case may be. If the 'Etikaaf observing man makes intention of 'Etikaaf after Maghrib prayer, he will deprive himself of the Sunnat.

Q.9: On whom is Ramadaan's 'Etikaaf due?

A. Observance of Ramadaan's 'Etikaaf during last ten days is "Sunnat-e-Kifaayah" i.e. a responsibility which will be fulfilled even if done by only one believer in a town otherwise all will be made accountable for it.

Q10: Which time is fixed for "Etikaaf-e-Mustahab"?

A. There is no fixed time for 'Etikaaf-e-Mustahab. As soon as one enters a mosque and forms "Niyat" of 'Etikaaf, begins earning its reward and will keep earning so long as he remains in the mosque. On stepping out of the mosque his 'Etikaaf will automatically come to an end. NOTE: This "Sawaab" (reward of virtue) involves no labour. Just an intention of 'Etikaaf in a mosque earns one reward. So one must not miss it. It is better if an inscription to this effect is put beside the main gate of every mosque advising believers to make intention of 'Etikaaf after having entered the mosque to earn reward gratis. It will serve as reminder to the knowing men and make unknowing ones aware of the reward.

Q11: Is fast conditional for 'Etikaaf?

A. Fasting is no condition for 'Etikaaf-e-Mustahab. But it is a prerequisite for 'Etikaaf-e-Sunnat which is observed during last ten days of Ramadaan and also for the 'Etikaaf of Mannat.

Q12: Will Sunnat be deemed to have been fulfilled if a sick man or a traveller observed 'Etikaaf without fasting?

A. If a sick man or a traveller observed 'Etikaaf without fasting it would not fulfill Sunnat. Such 'Etikaaf is Nafil one. He will earn the reward of Nafil worship.

Q13: Will fast be due or not if one makes intention of Mannat's 'Etikaaf sans fasting?

A. Fasting is a prerequisite for the 'Etikaaf of Mannat. If one formed Niyat of one month's 'Etikaaf without fasting even then he will have to observe fasts during 'Etikaaf.

Q14: Is it right or not to make Mannat for observing 'Etikaaf at night?

A. It is wrong to make Mannat for observing 'Etikaaf at night because fast is not observed in the night. Similarly if one makes Mannat for observing 'Etikaaf today and he has taken meal then his 'Etikaaf will not be valid. Likewise, if one makes intention of Mannat's 'Etikaaf of today after meridian Shar'ee and is not in the state of fast then his Mannat will not be correct as he can not intend for fast now and in case he can, for example, he makes intention before meridian Shar'ee even then his 'Etikaaf will not be valid, for, this fast is Nafil one whereas "Waajib" fast is required for 'Etikaaf. And if one observed Nafil fast and then made Mannat of 'Etikaaf, his Mannat would not be correct as Nafil fast can not be a substitute for Waajib fast.

Q15: Can Mannat of a month's 'Etikaaf be fulfilled in Ramadaan or not?

A. If one makes Mannat of observing one month's Etikaaf he can not fulfill it in Ramadaan. He will have to observe fasts particularly for this Etikaaf.

Q16: Is it permissible or not to step out of the mosque during Etikaaf?

A. The one who is observing "Etikaaf Waajib" can not step out of the mosque without a valid excuse. If he does, his Etikaaf will be spoilt. Likewise, Etikaaf-e-Sunnat will also get spoilt if the Etikaaf-observing man steps out of the mosque without a valid excuse.

Q17: Can woman come out from "Masjid-e-Bait" during Etikaaf or not?

A. A woman who is observing Etikaaf irrespective of "Waajib" or "Masnoon" at Masjid-e-Bait (the place reserved for prayer at home) can not come out from It without a valid excuse. If she does even though remains within the precinct of her house, her Etikaaf will be spoilt.

Q18: What excuse is there for stepping out of the mosque during Etikaaf?

A. There are two excuses for coming out from the mosque during Etikaaf i.e. (1). "Haajat-e-Tabi'ee" (natural needs) like relieving oneself, abstersion, ablution and bath and (2). "Haajat-e-Shar'ee" (Shar'ee needs) like offering Jumu'ah or Eid prayer in other

mosque if not held in the mosque where he is observing Etikaaf or to climb the minaret of the mosque for calling Azaan if its way/door is from outside the mosque and in case the way of the minaret is from inside the mosque then anyone can climb it for Azaan without particularising the Muazzin.

Q19: Can Etikaaf-observing man perform ablution or bath in mosque?

A. The permission accorded to "Mo'takif (Etikaaf-observing man) for stepping out of the mosque to perform ablution or take bath is aimed at preserving the sanctity of the mosque, for, dropping/sprinkling the water of ablution or bath in mosque is unlawful. And in case a trough, basin is available in which he can perform ablution taking all care that no drop of water falls in the mosque during the process then he can not go out of the mosque for ablution. If he does, his Etikaaf will be spoilt. Likewise, if there is a place or pond for performing ablution or bath within the periphery of the mosque then he can not go outside.

Q20: Can "Mo'takif stay or not outside the mosque for some other need after relieving oneself?

A. If Mo'takif (Etikaaf-observing man) goes out of the mosque to relieve oneself he must come back immediately after abstersion without any delay. If the house of his friend is situated near the mosque then he is not required to use his (friend's) lavatory. He can go to his own house for the purpose. But in case, he has two houses - one is located near the mosque and the other at some distance then he should go to the nearby house. The religious scholars maintain that if Mo'takif goes to the distant house in the given case, his Etikaaf will be spoilt.

Q21: When should Mo'takif leave the mosque for other mosque to offer Jumu'ah prayer?

A. If Jumu'ah prayer is not held in the mosque where one is observing Etikaaf then he should leave the mosque for the nearest mosque where Jumu'ah prayer is held at such time after post-meridian that he could offer Sunnat prayer there before second Azaan and in case the mosque where Jumu'ah prayer is held is situated at a distant place then he can go even before meridian. But he should leave at such a calculated time that he could, reaching there, offer Sunnat prayer before second Azaan. He should reach there neither much before the time nor be late.

Q22: How long can this Mo'takif stay in mosque after offering Jumu'ah prayer?

A. Mo'takif should come back to his Etikaaf s mosque after having offered Jumu'ah prayer followed by four or six Rak'ahs of Sunnat. If he needs to repeat Zuhar prayer (being doubtful about the accomplishment of Jumu'ah prayer due to omission of any pre-requisite), he should offer it in his Etikaaf s mosque.

Q23: Will Etikaaf of this Mo'takif be spoilt or not if he stays in the principal mosque?

A. The Mo'takif who came to the principal mosque to offer Jumu'ah prayer (from his Etikaaf s mosque) and did not go back but instead stayed there for a day and night or completed his Etikaaf there in such case his Etikaaf would not be spoilt. But it is Makrooh to do so.

Q24: Can Mo'takif go or not to other mosque for congregational prayer?

A. If one is observing Etikaaf in such mosque where Jama'at (congregational prayer) is not held five times a day then he can go to other mosque to attend Jama'at.

Q25: Can Mo'takif step out of the mosque for some other need than "Haajat-e-Shar'ee" or "Haajat-e-Tabi'ee"?

A. Mo'takif can step out of his Etikaaf s mosque under the doctrine of necessity apart from Shar'ee needs and natural needs. For example, the mosque where one is observing Etikaaf falls down or he is forced out of the mosque or he is under threat and feels that if he does not leave the mosque, irreparable harm may come to his person or to his property, in such case if he shifts to other mosque, his Etikaaf will not be spoilt.

Q26: How is that for Mo'takif who goes out of the mosque to rescue a drowning man or for such exigent case?

A. If Mo'takif steps out of the mosque to rescue a drowning man or a man engulfed in fire or to give evidence in a case or to inquire after the sick or to attend funeral prayer even though there is none to offer funeral prayer, in such case his Etikaaf will be spoilt.

Q27: Will Etikaaf be spoilt or not if Mo'takif eats or drinks

something during fasting by mistake? A. If Mo'takif eats or drinks something in the day by

mistake, his Etikaaf will not be spoilt. Likewise, Etikaaf is not spoilt by abuse or brawl but such indecent things strip it of the divine light and grace.

Q28: Which things spoil Etikaaf?

A. The following things spoil Etikaaf:

(1). Stepping out of mosque without necessity, (2). to have sex intentionally or unintentionally irrespective of discharge and whether it is done within or without the precinct of the mosque in the day or at night, (3). to kiss or (4). touch or (5) hug a woman provided that he discharges, (6). for woman: to be free from menstruation or (7). discharge of blood of the childbirth, (8). protracted madness or unconsciousness that one can not observe fast.

It is unlawful for a Mo'takif to kiss or touch or hug a woman though he does not discharge, for, such acts come under sex. However, discharge during sleep does not spoil Etikaaf.

Q29: Which acts are permissible for Mo'takif in mosque?

A. Mo'takif can hold "Nikah" (can be united in matrimony) and can refer to his wife verbally if divorced her revocably (can remarry his wife whom he divorced conditionally) in mosque. Likewise, he can eat, drink and sleep in mosque maintaining the sanctity of the mosque. If he goes out of the mosque for such purposes, his Etikaaf will be spoiled. Non-Mo'takif can not eat, drink and sleep in a mosque unless he intends for Etikaaf and offers prayer or do "Zikr" (remembrance of Allah) before doing so.

Q30: Can Mo'takif buy or sell something in mosque under necessity?

A. Mo 'takif can buy or purchase a thing necessary for his family in mosque provided that the commodity is not placed inside the mosque. If done then it should be in such a small quantity that it does not encroach the space of the mosque and in case shopping is done for business even though the merchandise is not placed in the mosque then it is impermissible.

Q31: How is that for keeping quiet during 'Etikaaf?

A. If Mo'takif keeps silence under the impression that keeping quiet during 'Etikaaf is a rewarding act, it is "Makrooh Tahreemi" (strictly odious act) otherwise there is no harm in keeping silence and in case he keeps quiet to avoid indecent or frivolous talk then it is, of course, a rewarding act because avoidance of indecent talk is Waajib.

And indulgence in such talk that carries neither reward nor sin meaning "Mubaah" is also Makrooh for Mo'takif unless direly needed. Indulgence in Mubaah talk in mosque without necessity ruins goodnesses as fire consumes the fuel.