

Is "Taraawih" prayer Sunnah or Nafil?

"Taraawih" (special night prayer offered in the holy month of Ramadaan) is by consensus Sunnat-e-Muakkadah (emphasised, regular Sunnah) for both men and women. It is impermissible to abandon it. Its Jama'at is Sunnat-e-Kifaayah i.e. an obligation which will be fulfilled if offered by some arranging Jama'at in mosque. Otherwise all will be sinner. One is not sinner if he offered Taraawih prayer by himself at home notwithstanding the Jama'at of Taraawih prayer was held in his neighbouring mosque. However an elite or leader whose presence in Jama'at draws more people and absence reduces the number of worshippers is not permitted to forgo Jama'at without valid reason.

What is the prescribed time of offering Taraawih prayer?

The prescribed time of offering Taraawih prayer begins after 'Ishaa prayer is over and lasts till dawn of Fajr. It can be offered before Witr prayer and after Witr as well. It is better for one whose some Rak'ahs of Taraawih were missed to offer Witr prayer with the Imaam in case he has stood to lead it and thereafter offer his remaining Rak'ahs provided he has offered Fard prayer under the leadership of the Imaam. It is also lawful if he completes his remaining Rak'ahs of Taraawih first and then offers Witr prayer by himself.

How many Rak'ahs are there in Taraawih and how to be offered?

It is a belief of the vast majority of Muslims that there are twenty Rak'ahs of Taraawih prayer. This is also proved by Ahaadess (Prophetic practice sayings). Muslims in all Islaamic countries have been and are offering twenty Rak'ahs of Taraawih since the time of Ameerul Mu'mineen Farooque Azam (may Allah be pleased with him). Twenty Rak'ahs of Taraawih are offered with ten "Salaams" i.e. after completion of every two Rak'ahs "Salaam" is said turning the face to the right side and then to the left. Both Imaam and Muqtadi should recite "Sana" at the outset of every two Rak'ah and also recite Durood Shareef and Du'aa after Tashah-hud. A break (to sit and rest) after every four Rak'ahs equal to the period in which four Rak'ahs are offered is "Mustahab" (commendable). This is called "Tarwiha".

What should be done during "Tarwiha"?

One may, in Tarwiha, sit silent or recite Kalimah or the Holy Qur-aan or Durood Shareef or offer four Rak'ahs prayer by himself or recite this Tasbih: "Subhaana Zil Mulki wal-Malakoot. Subhaana Zi'l'izate wal-'Azmate wal-Kibri-yaaa-i wal-Jabaroot. Subhaanal Malikil Haie-yil-Lazee Laa Yanaamu walla Yamoot. Subboohun Qudoosun Rabbunaa wa Rabbul Malaaa-ikati war-Rooh. Laa Ilaaha Illaal Laahu Nastaghfirul Laaha Nas-alukai Jannata wa Na'oozu Bika Minan Naar" (Glory be to the Owner of the Kingdom and Sovereignty. Glory be to the Possessor of all honour, all grandeur, all greatness and all awe. Glory be to the King Who is ever-living, Whom neither sleep overtakes nor death. Absolutely Pure and All Holy is our Sovereign Lord as well as of the Angels and of the "Ruh" (spirit). There is none worthy of worship but Allah alone. O' Allah! we beg Your forgiveness, we beseech You for (our admittance) into paradise and seek refuge with You from the Hell-fire).

Which things, acts are "Makrooh" in Taraawih?

The following things, acts are Makrooh if done in Taraawih:

To show haste in recitation from the Holy Qur-aan and in observance of "Rukn [pl.Arkaan]" of prayer, to give up "Ta'awuz", "Tasmiyah" and "Tasbih", to offer two Rak'ahs after every two Rak'ahs (i.e. not to have respite after every four Rak'ahs) to sit and rest after ten Rak'ahs to offer Nafl prayer with Jama'at after four Rak'ahs or to offer Taraawih prayer in sitting posture without valid reason

How is that for finishing the whole Qur-aan in Taraawih prayer?

To finish (complete the recitation of) the whole Quraan serially once in Taraawih is Sunnat-e-Muakkadah and twice is excellent and thrice is very excellent provided that Muqtadis are not burdened. However the recitation of the whole Qur-aan once must not be abandoned due to lethargy of people.

There are over six thousand verses in the Holy Qur'aan and total Rak'ahs of Taraawih will be six hundred if the holy month of Ramadaan is of thirty days. So it is not difficult to recite and listen to the Holy Quraan in Taraawih.

How is that for hiring an "Haafiz"?

It is impermissible to hire an Haafiz (the one who has learnt the Holy Qur-aan by heart) for conducting Taraawih. Both giver and taker of payment will be sinner. However it is not impermissible to give something to the Haafiz in recognition of his services provided that it is settled at the outset that neither he will be paid nor he will seek any payment.

It is also permitted to make a deal of some payment with the Haafiz as compensation for conveyance and observance of punctuality of time if no free Haafiz is available.

How rewarding it is if one conducts Taraawih only for the sake of Allah thereby making himself worthy of the great meed and reward in the hereafter.

How to offer Taraawih if no Haafiz is available?

Ten Qur-aanic chapters from "Alam Tara Kaiefa" (Surah Feil) to the last one (Surah Naas) should be recited in ten Rak'ahs and then the same Surahs be repeated in the remaining ten Rak'ahs if no Haafiz is available or the whole Qur-aan can not be recited due to any valid reason. This method is easy to follow and also averts distraction of attention and concentration.

Is it lawful or not to hold "Shabeenah"?

("shabeenah" is a Persian word which means recitation of the whole Qur-aan in congregational prayer in particular night(s) of Ramadaan).

It has become a practice these days that one night's Shabeenah is held in which the whole Qur-aan is recited with some people having chit chat in mosque or outside the mosque and even smocking and enjoying hubble bubble and join one or two Rak'ah(s) of Shabeenah as and when they wish to. Such arrangement is impermissible.

Besides, the Huffaaz [pl. of Haafiz] are either generally tired or do not demonstrate a sense of responsibility in Shabeenah and recite the Holy Qur-aan so rapidly that nothing is understood except "Ya'lamoona" and "Ta'lamoona". Mostly they mince words and letters with the result prayer is not accomplished at all what to talk of Imaamat and thus they incur sin of incorrect Qiraa-at rather than earning reward.

How to recite the Holy Qur-aan in Taraawih?

Qiraa-at in obligatory prayer should be done slowly and calmly (showing no haste) and in Taraawih be done at moderate speed and in Nafl prayer of night may be done with a slight speed provided that words and letters are pronounced properly i.e. the stretching proportion of the sound of "Mad" (prolongation mark on long vowel) fixed by "Qaaries" (the ones who recite the Holy Qur-aan in accord with the standard rules) is observed otherwise it is "Haraam" (unlawful).

There is an express command for reciting the Holy Qur-aan with "Tarteel" (clear and distinct recitation).

It is obligatory to recite the Holy Qur-aan with correct pronunciation to the best of one's ability in obligatory prayer and to recite it incorrectly or so speedily that nothing is understood except "Ya'lamoona" and "Ta'lamoona" is Haraam.

Can one who offered 'Ishaa prayer by himself join Jama'at of Taraawih and Witr or not?

The one who offered 'Ishaa prayer by himself can offer Taraawih with Jama'at but should offer Witr prayer by himself It is also permissible if he joins Witr Jama'at And in case he offered 'Ishaa prayer with Jama'at but offered Taraawih by himself, he can offer Witr prayer with Jama'at. Doing this is an excellen act.

Can omitted, missed Taraawih prayer be offered later or not?

Omitted, missed Taraawih prayer can not be offered later if offered that will not be Taraawih but "Nafl Mustahab" like that of Sunnat prayer of "Asr" and "'Ishaa".