

Positioning People Beforehand in the Centre of the Rows to Create an Exit for the others and Placing Chairs in the Masjid

Q: Salaah-702: (1) BV the grace of Allaah, we have many people attending the Masjid here. However, when latecomers stand up after salaah to complete their missed Rakaahs, those in the front rows have to wait for them. To alleviate the problem, two to three persons are positioned in the back rows (starting from a few rows after the first) directly behind the Imaam before the salaah so that the people in the front rows may be able to pass through after salaah. All these rows are filled before the salaah is over. Is this permissible?

(2) Another thing that happens in this Masjid is that a few chairs are placed in the back rows before every salaah. On Fridays, close to fifty to sixty chairs are placed for the Jumu'ah salaah. This arrangement is made by the trustees of the Masjid. However, apart from a few excused persons, most of the chairs are occupied by people who have no excuse to sit and can well perform their salaah standing. This arrangement is therefore encouraging people to sit on chairs. What is the ruling concerning such an arrangement and about people fabricating excuses to sit on chairs for salaah?

Answer: (1) The method stated in the question conflicts with the Sunnah is a grave Makrooh Tahreemi act. It opposes the method of forming rows because the Sunnah method advocates completing the front rows first, standing close by and ensuring that there are no gaps in between. It is only when a row is formed that the next is started. There are several Ahadeeth pertinent to the subject:

1. Hadhrat Jaabir bin Samurah RADI. reports that Rasulullaah SAW. said, "Will you not make your rows like the angels do before their Rabb?" "O Rasulullaah SAW. the Sahabah RADI. asked, "How do the angels form their rows before their Rabb?" Rasulullaah SAW. replied, "They complete the front rows and stand close to each other. Mirqaaf, the commentary of Mishkaat states, "This means that a row is not started until the one in front has not been completed.
2. Hadhrat Anas RADI. narrates that Rasulullaah SAW. said, "Complete the front rows first and then those after them so that those left over may be accommodated in the last row.
3. It is reported that Hadhrat Ibraheem Nakha'ee RAH. disliked anyone standing in a latter row until the former row had been filled.
4. Hadhrat Baraa bin Aazib RADI. reports that Rasulullaah SAW. said, "Verily Allaah and the angels salute those who are close to the front rows. No step is more loved by Allaah than the step a person takes to fill a gap in a row of salaah.
5. Hadhrat Abdullaah bin Umar RADI. narrates that Rasulullaah SAW. said, "Straighten your rows, keep your shoulders aligned, fill all gaps and be compassionate towards your brothers. Never leave gaps for Shaytaan to fill. Allaah will join with one who joins a row (by filling a gap) and Allaah will sever ties with one who severs a row (by failing to fill a gap).

Durrul Mukhtar (Vol.1 Pg.605) states that it is Makrooh for a person to stand in a row when there is a gap in the row ahead.

Therefore, the people who stand in the back rows beforehand are depriving themselves of the great virtues of the front rows and also engaging in a Makrooh act. This practice must therefore be terminated because it is foolish and a grave Makrooh Tahreemi act.

What harm can be caused by merely waiting a little while for people to complete their salaah? It is indeed sad that people can while away hours in worldly activities without even realising the time, whereas even a little while extra in the Masjid is too much for them to tolerate! In fact, they are even prepared to perpetrate a Makrooh act to facilitate their exit! Waiting a while longer will earn them great rewards and the du'aa of the angels.

Hadhrat Abu Hurayrah RADI. reports that Rasulullaah SAW. said, "A person's salaah in the Masjid is twenty seven times greater than his salaah at home or in the marketplace. This is because when he makes a proper wudhu and then proceeds to the Masjid solely for the purpose of performing salaah, every step he takes elevates his rank and erases a sin. After he completes the salaah, the angels continuously make du'aa for him as long as he remains in the place of salaah. They pray, 'O Allaah! Shower Your mercy on him. O Allaah! Be kind to him.' He also receives the reward of salaah as long as he remains waiting for salaah." Another narration adds that the angels also pray, "O Allaah! Forgive him! O Allaah! Accept his repentance." This du'aa then continues as long as the person does not harm anyone (by hand or tongue) and as long as his wudhu lasts.

Answer: (2) Those who are really unable to perform salaah standing may do so sitting on a chair, but should make arrange their own chairs. The responsibility is theirs and not the duty of the trustees. By having the chairs placed beforehand, many people who are not excused from standing will perform salaah on them and their salaah will therefore be invalid. This arrangement should therefore be stopped. And Allaah knows best what is most correct.

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