

For Women to Attend the Masjid and Eid Gah

Q: Salaah-546: What do the Ulema and Muftis have to say about the following:

The Ghayr Muqallideen and some free thinking Muslims are adamant about the fact that women cannot be prevented from attending the Masjid and Eid Gah. They emphasize that women perform the Eid salaah at the Eid Gah and claim that people stopping them are sinners. Men were instructed to allow their women to attend the Masjid during the time of Rasulullaah SAW. and were told not to prevent them. The women were also instructed to attend the Eid Gah so emphatically that those who did not have a shawl to cover herself was told to wrap herself together with her friend in one shawl. They say that since there was so much emphasis during the time of Rasulullaah SAW. no one today has the right to prevent women from attending. They also present the following to substantiate their claim:

1. "Do not prevent your women from the Masjid when they seek your permission . {Mishkaatul Masaabeeh Pg.97 }

2. "Do not refuse a woman permission when she asks leave to attend the Masjid. {Mishkaatul Masaabeeh Pg.96}

3. Hadhrat Abdullaah bin Umar RADI. once related that Rasulullaah SAW. said, "No person should prevent his wife from the Masjid." To this, his son (Hadhrat Bilaal RADI. remarked, "But we will prevent them." Hadhrat Abdullaah bin Umar RADI. became angry at this and said, "You have the nerve to say that when I am narrating a Hadith of Rasulullaah SAW. to you!" Hadhrat Abdullaah bin Umar RADI. then never spoke to that son until the day he passed away. {Mishkaatul Masaabeeh Pg.97 }

Concerning attending the Eid Gah they present the following:

1. Hadhrat Ummu Atiyya RADI. reports that they were instructed to even take the menstruating women and women in seclusion to the Eid salaah so that they may present themselves at the gathering of the Muslims. The menstruating women however stayed away from the place where salaah was performed. When someone queried about those who did not have a shawl to cover themselves properly, Rasulullaah SAW. advised that such a woman share a shawl with a friend. {Mishkaatul Masaabeeh Pg.725-126}

We now wish to ask what the ruling ought to be in this age that is filled with evil. If it is said that it is not permissible for women to attend the Masjid, what is the reply to the narrations quoted above? Please reply in detail.

Answer: Women cannot be allowed to attend the Masjid and Eid Gah in this time of evil. The Fuqahaa RAH. have never refuted the fact that women were permitted to go to the Masjid during the time of Rasulullaah SAW. However that was the best of all times when Rasulullaah

SAW. was himself alive and people were protected from evils. Revelation was descending, new injunctions were being taught and needed to be learnt all the time and the best of all was the privilege of performing salaah behind Rasulullaah SAW. himself. Rasulullaah SAW. used to relate and interpret dreams and the informing the Sahabah RADI. of many strange and interesting things. It was for these reasons that women were allowed to attend the Masjid.

It is however wrong to state that they were given the same emphatic instruction to attend the Masjid as men were given. It is not necessary for women to perform salaah in Jamaa'ah as it is for men. It is for this reason that Rasulullaah SAW. said, "Had it not been for the women and children at home, I would have the Isha salaah started and then instruct the youngsters to set alight the homes (of those men who do not attend the salaah in Jamaa'ah). This Hadith makes it evident that salaah in Jamaa'ah is not compulsory for women just as it is not compulsory for children, because of which their presence in the homes would be a cause for preventing them from being burnt down. Had the command to attend the Masjid been emphasised for women, they would have also been marked for the punishment stated in the Hadith.

Furthermore, the Ahadeeth state that it is better and more rewarding for women to perform their salaah in the innermost corner of their home, despite the fact that salaah in Jamaa'ah is times better than individual salaah, salaah in the Masjidun Nabawi is better than fifty thousand salaahs anywhere else and salaah behind Rasulullaah SAW. himself is better than anything else. Here are few Ahadeeth making this apparent:

1. Hadhrat Ummu Salamah (RADI.) reports that Rasulullaah SAW. said "The best Masjid for a woman is innermost recesses of her home.
2. Hadhrat Abdullaah bin Umar RADI. narrates that Rasulullaah SAW. said, A woman is an object of concealment, so when she leaves her home. Shaytaan ogles at her (trying hard to involve her and others looking at her in sin). The closest she gets to Allaah is in the innermost corner of her home.
3. Hadhrat Abdullaah bin Mas'ood RADI. reports that the best salaah a woman can perform is the one she performs in the innermost corner of her home.
4. Hadhrat Abdullaah bin Umar RADI.. reports that Rasulullaah SAW. said, "Do not prevent you women from the Masaajid even though their homes are better for them (then attending the Masjid).
5. Hadhrat Ummu Salamah RADI. reports that Rasulullaah SAW. said, "For a woman to perform her salaah in a room of her house is better than her performing salaah in the courtyard of her house and for her to perform her salaah in an inner room of her house is better than her performing salaah just any room of her house and salaah in an inner room of her house is better than her salaah in her local Masjid.

Now take note of the following decision of Rasulullaah SAW.

6. Hadhrat Ummu Humayd RADI. the wife of Hadhrat Abu Humayd Saa'idi RADI.?came to

Rasulullaah SAW. and said, "O Rasulullaah SAW. I Love to perform salaah behind you." Rasulullaah SAW. then told her, "I know that you love to perform behind me but your salaah in the innermost recess of your house is better than your salaah in your room, your salaah in your room is better than your salaah anywhere else on your house and your salaah anywhere else in your house is better than your salaah in your local Masjid. Likewise, your salaah in your local Masjid is better than your salaah in this Masjid of mine," She then had a place made for her in the innermost and darkest recess of her house and performed her salaah there until the day she passed away.

The following is apparent from the above narration:

1. No emphasis was placed on women attending the Masjid during the times of Rasulullaah SAW. They were permitted, but such advice was given that was aimed at leading them to stop by themselves.
2. The permission granted to them was a concession (RUKHSAH) and something permissible (ABAAH.) but not something preferred or encouraged.
3. The action of Hadhrat Ummu Humayd RAH. conformed perfectly with the wish of Rasulullaah SAW. and was exactly what he wanted.

How regrettable it is that people who encourage women to attend the Masaajid are really acting against the wish of Rasulullaah SAW. What is worse is that they profess that they are acting according to the Sunnah and that they are really reviving the Sunnah. If performing salaah in the Masjid really was a Sunnah, Rasulullaah SAW. would never have stated that performing salaah in the local Masjid is better than salaah in his Masjid and that salaah at home is better than salaah in the local Masjid. Can leaving out the Sunnah carry more rewards than practising the Sunnah? By encouraging women to perform their salaah at home, was Rasulullaah SAW. then encouraging? to forsake the Sunnah? Allaah forbid! Allaah forbid! Do the people who propound this perhaps regard themselves as more pious than Rasulullaah SAW.? Do they perhaps regard their Masaajid as better than the Masjid of Rasulullaah SAW.? Do they perhaps regard their women as better than the women of Rasulullaah SAW.'s time? Do they perhaps regard their times as better than the times of Rasulullaah SAW.?

Furthermore, the concession to attend the Masjid during the time of Rasulullaah SAW. also had conditions attached. Women were to attend without any jewellery, without attractive clothing. without scent or any other forms of beautification. Hadhrat Aa'isha RADI. reports that Rasulullaah SAW. was sitting in the Masjid when a woman from the Banu Muzaynah tribe arrived showing off her elaborate clothing. Rasulullaah SAW. addressed the Sahabah RADI. saying, "O people! Stop your women from adornment and displaying themselves in the Masaajid because the Bani Israa'eel were cursed only when their women started to adorn themselves and make a display of themselves in the Masaajid.

This makes it evident that the concession to attend the Masaajid was not without restrictions, whereas it was a time free of evils. However, when the evils started to manifest themselves during the time of Hadhrat Umar RADI. he and the eminent Sahabah RADI. of the time had the

proclamation made that women should not attend the Masjid. This was approved by all the Sahabah RADI.

Badaai'us Sanaa'i (Vol.1 Pg. 157) states, It is not permissible for young women to attend the Masaajid because of the narration from Hadhrat Umar RADI. stating that he prevented young women from the Masaajid. This is because women leaving the home leads to the spread of evil and anything leading to such evil is Haraam."

Hujjatullaahil Baaligha states that amongst the factors that allow people to miss salaah in Jamaa'ah is the fear of evil developing, such as a woman leaving her home wearing perfume. There is therefore no inconsistency between Rasulullaah SAW.'s advice not to refuse women permission to attend the Masaajid and the decree of the Sahabah RADI. to prevent women from attending. This is because there are two types of protectiveness as mentioned by Rasulullaah SAW. The one type of protectiveness stems from pride and haughtiness and this is the one that is forbidden. However, the second type of protectiveness that stems from a fear of evil developing is permissible (and encouraged) and it is this type that spurred the Sahabah RADI. on to prevent women from the Masaajid.

In this commentary of Bukhaari Allaama Ayni RAH. quotes a narration stating that Hadhrat Abdullaah bin Umar RADI. used to stand in the Masjid on Fridays and throw pebbles at women to drive them away from the Masjid. Hadhrat Abdullaah bin Mas'ood RADI. also used to drive women away from the Masjid on Fridays, telling them, "Go away! Your homes are better for you.

Sensing the dawn of imminent evil, Ummul Mu'mineen Hadhrat Aa'isha RADI. said. "If Rasulullaah SAW. had to see how women have started to behave, he would have surely forbidden them from going to the Masjid just as the women of the Bani Israa'eel were prevented from doing So.

Alter quoting this statement of Hadhrat Aa'isha RADI. It the commentator of Bukhaari, Allaama Ayni RAH. says. "As for today (855 A.H'), we seek Allaah's protection from it. He also adds that if Hadhrat Aa'isha RADI. had to see the fashions and evils that the women of his day had started. She would have been even more opposed to the attending the Masaajid. Amongst the evils he states in his book is the elaborate clothing that women wear and their perfumes that they use to attract the attention of men. He also speaks of then walking about the marker places without covering their faces and states that the prevalent during the times of Hadhrat Aa'isha RADI. were not even a thousandth part of the evils prevalent during his times.

If this was the situation in the 9'i' century of Islaam, what can be said about the immorality and licentiousness of today's women of Islaam's 14th century who are wearing fashionable clothing and walking about without veils and even headscarves? How can people attempt to bring women to the Masaajid during these times and prove their deed from the blessed time of Rasulullaah SAW.? Who can guarantee that they will walk with lowered gazes, not use perfume and powders and stay out of the gazes of immoral men?

As for the narration in which Hadhrat Abdullaah bin Umar RADI.'s son said, "But we will

prevent them", it must be noted that Hadhrat Abdullaah bin Umar RADI. became angry and severed ties with his son because the apparent wording of his son's statement appeared to snub Rasulullaah SAW.'s statement. The incident is similar to that of Hadhrat Imaam Abu yusuf RAH. who was once relating a Hadith stating that Rasulullaah SAW. liked to eat pumpkin when one of his students said, "But I do not like it! Imaam Abu Yusuf RAH. immediately drew his sword and said, "If you do not: repent right now. I shall execute you." He threatened to execute the student because his words snubbed those of Rasulullaah SAW. and to because not having a liking for pumpkin is punishable by death. Why else did Hadhrat Abdullaah bin Umar RADI. himself then drive women away from the Masjid by throwing pebbles at them?

As for the command of Rasulullaah SAW. instructing women to attend the Eid Gah, it must be remembered that there are three types of commands. The first type denotes compulsion. e.g. "Establish salaah". The second type advises doing something that is preferable, e.g. the verse "So eat from it (from the sacrificed animal) and feed it to the afflicted poor (those who are truly in need), (there is no compulsion in this, but doing so is encouraged). The third type of command advises something that is permissible. e.g. "When you emerge from the state of Ihraam, then you may hunt (outside the boundaries of the Haram) (there is no compulsion here either and doing so is neither encouraged nor discouraged)

Now let us ascertain which type of command is issued in the Hadith. It is certainly not the command denoting compulsion because none holds the opinion that it is Waajib (compulsory) for women to attend the Eid Gah. It is also not the commands advising something that is preferable because Rasulullaah SAW. would then not have mentioned that a woman's salaah in her home is better than salaah in the Masjidun Nabawi. If salaah in the local Masjid is not preferable when it is close to the home. what about going to the Eid Gah, which is out of town?

Furthermore, the Eid salaah is Waajib (compulsory) while the five daily salaahs and the Jumu'ah salaah are Fardh (obligatory). When it is better not to perform the Fardh (obligatory) salaah in the Masjid, it will naturally not be best to perform the Waajib (compulsory) out of the home.

The command in the Hadith therefore advised something that is permissible and this permissibility was restricted to the time of Rasulullaah SAW. The command cited in the Hadith therefore does not denote compulsion or a preferred act.? In fact, even if it is taken to denote a preferred act, it will not be practiced for reason of the evil it may lead to. This conforms to an accepted principle of jurisprudence that states, "Forsaking a Makrooh act attracts more virtue because it is better than carrying out a Masnoon act.

Imaam Tahaawi RAH. writes that women were taken to the Eid Gah only during the early stages of Islaam to show the numbers of the Muslims to the Kuffaar. Since this need no longer exists, the need to take women to the Eid Gah also exists no longer.

Let us now examine what the Fuqahaa have to say in the light of the Qur'aan and the Ahadeeth:

1. Allaama Ayni RAH. says. "The Fatwa in this age is that women are forbidden from attending all salaah. be it during the day or the night and regardless of whether the women are young or

old. The word of the author (of Kanzud Daqaa'iq) (jamaa'at) includes the Jumu'ah salaah, the Eid salaah. Istisqaa salaah and even attending lectures, especially the lectures of ignorant people who pose as Ulema only to acquire material gains and fulfil their desires.

2. Durrul Mukhtaar (Vol .1 Pg.529) states, "Because of the evils of the times, the Fatwa issued is that it is Makrooh for women to attend the Masjid even for the Jumu'ah salaah, the Eid salaah and lectures, even though it be old ladies and at night.

3.Fataawaa Aalamgeeri (Vol.1 Pg.56) states, "The Fatwa nowadays is that it is Makrooh for women to attend all salaahs in the Masjid because of the evils of the times. as stated in Kaafi."

4.Bahrur Raa'iq (Vol.1 Pg.358) states; "Women may not attend the Jamaa'ah salaah because of Allaah's words, "And remain glued to your homes" and because Rasulullaah SAW. said, 'For a woman to perform her salaah in a room of her house is better than her performing salaah in the courtyard of her house and for her to perform her salaah in an inner room of her house is better than her performing salaah in any room of her house.' The author of Kanz has stated in Kaafi that the Fatwa of this day is that it is Makrooh for women to attend all salaahs in Jamaa'ah."

5. Rasaa'ilul Arkaan (Pg.100) states. "The permission to attend the Jamaa'ah salaah was restricted to those times. Today however, there is a great chance of evil developing because men and women would be intermingling it is therefore appropriate in this day and age that women be forbidden from salaah in Jamaa'ah because attending the Jamaa'ah salaah is not binding on them and the Qur'aan and Ahadeeth make it clear that it is Waajib (compulsory) to stay away from all evil. It is also unanimously accepted that everything leading to Haraam will also be Haraam."

6. Hadhrat Shah Abdul Haqq Muhaddith Dehlawi RAH. says: "It is Makrooh for women to attend the Jamaa'ah salaah during these times because of the fear of evils developing. Women were allowed during the time of Rasulullaah SAW. for the purposes of educating them, a reason that no longer exists because the laws of the Shari'ah are now widespread and it is best for women to remain indoors.

And Allaah knows best what is most correct.

Fatawa Rahimiyyah vol.2