

Is Offering Nafl Salāh at Home Superior to Offering It in Masjid al-Ḥarām and Masjid al-Nabawī?

Darulifta Ahlesunnat (Dawateislami)

Question

What do the noble scholars and jurists of Islamic law say about the following: It is established in the ḥadīth that offering nafl salāh at home is superior to offering it in the masjid. Does this virtue also apply in comparison to offering nafl in Masjid al-Ḥarām and Masjid al-Nabawī? In other words, is offering nafl at home superior to offering nafl in these two noble Masājid (Ḥarām and Nabawī)?

Answer

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ
الْجَوَابُ بِعَوْنِ الْمَلِكِ الْوَهَّابِ اللَّهُمَّ هِدَايَةَ الْحَقِّ وَالصَّوَابِ

Undoubtedly, it is proven from the saying and actions of the Noble Rasool ﷺ that offering salāh, other than farḍ, such as nafl and other prayers, in the home is superior. This virtue is unrestricted and includes Masjid al-Nabawī and Masjid Ḥarām as well. Therefore, offering sunnah and nafl salāh at home is superior to offering it in the two noble Masājid. The reason for this is that offering nafl in seclusion is preferred and offering nafl at home provides more seclusion and greater protection from ostentation. Also, this will become a means for mercy and blessings in the home.

Nowadays, it has become common for people to offer sunnah and nafl prayers in the masājid along with the farḍ salāh. If someone does not offer sunnah and nafl salāh in the masjid, people will begin to develop negative assumptions about them. Along with this, there is a fear that one may skip the sunnah and nafl salāh after returning home due to becoming occupied in other activities. Even if one does offer them, they do not feel the same level of humility and devotion (Khushū‘ and Khuḍū‘) due to not having the same atmosphere as in the masjid. Therefore, the sunnah and nafl salāh should be offered in the masjid nowadays so that one can offer them with tranquility and others are not led to negative assumptions.

It is reported on the authority of Zaid Bin Thābit رضي الله تعالى عنه that the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ stated:

صلاة المرء في بيته أفضل من صلاته في مسجدي هذا، إلا المكتوبة

Translation: The salāh a person offers in his home is superior to the salāh he offers in this masjid of mine, except the obligatory prayers.

(Sunan Abī Dāwūd, Vol. 01, p. 274, Publ. Al-Maktabah al-‘Asriyah, Beirut)

‘Allāmah Badr-Uddin ‘Aynī رحمه الله تعالى عليه states in commentary of the above mentioned ḥadīth:

فعلى هذا: لو صلى نافلة في مسجد المدينة كانت بألف صلاة على القول بدخول النوافل في عموم الحديث، وإذا صلاها في بيته كانت أفضل من ألف صلاة، وهكذا حكم مسجد مكة وبيت المقدس

Translation: Based on this, if one offers nafl in Masjid al-Madīnah, it is equal to offering a thousand salāh according to the opinion that nafl is included in the

generality of the ḥadīth, whereas if he offers it in his home, it is better than a thousand salāh. **The ruling of Masjid al-Makkah and Bayt al-Maqdis is the same.** (‘Umdah al-Qārī Sharḥ Sahīh al-Bukhārī, Vol. 05, p. 267, Publ. Dār Iḥyā al-Turās al-‘Arabiyy, Beirut)

Regarding the blessed habit of the Noble Rasool ﷺ for offering sunnah and nafl salāh, it is reported in *Sunan Abī Dāwūd*:

عن عبد الله بن شقيق، قال: سألت عائشة رضي الله عنها عن صلوة رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم من التطوع، فقالت: كان يصلي قبل الظهر أربعاً في بيتي، ثم يخرج فيصلّي بالناس، ثم يرجع إلى بيتي فيصلّي ركعتين، وكان يصلي بهم العشاء، ثم يدخل بيتي فيصلّي ركعتين--- وكان إذا طلع الفجر صلى ركعتين، ثم يخرج فيصلّي بالناس صلاة الفجر

Translation: It is narrated from ‘Abdullah Ibn Shaqīq that he said: I asked ‘Ā’ishah about the Noble Rasool’s ﷺ nafl salāh. She said: He would offer four rak‘ah before Zuhr in my home, then he would exit and lead the people in prayer. Then he would return to my home and offer two rak‘at. He would lead the people in Maghrib, then he would return to my home and offer two rak‘at. He would lead them in ‘Ishā, then he would enter my home and offer two rak‘at... Then when Fajr would begin, he would offer two rak‘at, then he would exit and lead the people in Fajr salāh.

(Sunan Abī Dāwūd, Vol. 02, p. 18, Summarized, Publ. Dār Iḥyā al-Turās al-‘Arabiyy, Beirut)

Listing the reason that offering nafl at home has been encouraged, Imām Muḥy-Uddīn Yaḥyā’ Bin Sharf al-Nawawī رحمه الله تعالى states:

إنما حث على النوافل في البيوت لكونها أخفى وأبعد من الرياء، وأصون من المحبطات، وليتبرك البيت بذلك، وتنزل فيه الرحمة والملائكة، وينفر منه الشياطين

Translation: Offering nafl in the home has been encouraged because it provides greater seclusion, is further from ostentation, is more protected from the causes which destroy the deeds. Furthermore, (it has been encouraged) so that it causes blessings in the home, mercy and angels descend therein, and shaytan is driven away.

(Sharḥ al-Nawawī ‘Alā al-Muslim, Vol. 06, p. 68, Publ. Dār Iḥyā al-Turās al-‘Arabiyy, Beirut)

If one fears that they will get occupied with other activities upon returning home, then nafl should be offered in the masjid, as stated in *Al-Durr al-Mukhtār Ma‘a Radd al-Muḥtār*:

(والأفضل في النفل غير التراويح المنزل إلا لخوف شغل عنها والأصح أفضلية ما كان أخشع وأخلص) شمل ما بعد الفريضة وما قبلها--- وحيث كان هذا أفضل يراعى ما لم يلزم منه خوف شغل عنها لذهب لبيته أو كان في بيته ما يشغل باله ويقلل خشوعه فيصلّيها حينئذ في المسجد، لأن اعتبار الخشوع أرجح

(Al-Durr al-Mukhtār Ma‘a Radd al-Muḥtār, Vol. 02, p. 22, Publ. Dār al-Fikr, Beirut)

A‘lā Hazrat Imām Aḥmad Razā Khān عليه رحمة الرحمن states in his Fatāwā:

سنن ونوافل کا گھر میں پڑھنا افضل اور یہی رسول اللہ صلی اللہ تعالیٰ علیہ وسلم کی عادت طیبہ--- بالجملہ اصل حکم استنباطی یہی ہے کہ سنن قبلہ مثل رکعتین فجر و رباعی ظہر و عصر و عشاء مطلقاً گھر میں پڑھ کر مسجد کو جائیں کہ ثواب زیادہ پائیں اور سنن بعدیہ مثل رکعتین ظہر و مغرب و عشاء میں جسے اپنے نفس پر اطمینان کامل حاصل ہو کہ گھر جا کر کسی ایسے کام میں جو اسے ادائے سنن سے باز رکھے مشغول نہ ہو گا، وہ مسجد سے فرض پڑھ کر پلٹ آئے اور سننیں گھر ہی میں پڑھے، تو بہتر اور اس سے ایک زیادت ثواب

یہ حاصل ہوگی، کہ جتنے قدم بارادہ بادائے سنن گھر تک آئے گا وہ سب حسنات میں لکھے جائیں گے، اور جسے یہ وثوق نہ ہو وہ مسجد میں پڑھ لے کہ لحاظِ افضلیت میں اصل نماز فوت نہ ہو، اور یہ معنی عارضی افضلیت صلوٰۃ فی البیت کے منافی نہیں۔ نظیر اس کی نماز وتر ہے کہ بہتر اخیر شب تک اس کی تاخیر ہے مگر جو اپنے جاگنے پر اعتماد نہ رکھتا ہو وہ پہلے ہی پڑھ لے۔ مگر اب عام عمل اہل اسلام، سنن کے مساجد ہی میں پڑھنے پر ہے اور اس میں مصالح ہیں کہ ان میں وہ اطمینان کم ہوتا ہے جو مساجد میں ہے اور عادت قوم کی مخالفت موجب طعن و انگشت نمائی و انتشارِ ظنون و فتح باب غیبت ہوتی ہے اور حکم صرف استجابی تھا تو ان مصالح کی رعایت اس پر مرجح ہے۔

Translation: Offering sunnah and nafl salāh at home is better and this was the blessed habit of the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ. In summary, the initial Mustahab ruling is that preceding sunnahs (such as the two rak‘ah of Fajr, the four rak‘ah of Zuhr, ‘Asr, and ‘Ishā) should all be offered at home before going to the Masjid as this will increase the reward. For subsequent sunnahs (such as two rak‘ah of Zuhr, Maghrib, and ‘Ishā), those who are certain about themselves that they will not get occupied in such activities which will prevent them from offering sunnah after returning home, they should return from the Masjid after having offered the Farḍ salah and offer the sunnah at home; this is better. One additional reward of this is that all of the steps taken towards the home with the intention of offering sunnah will be recorded as good deeds. However, the one who doesn't have confidence about himself should offer it in the Masjid to ensure that he doesn't skip the salāh itself in effort of attaining greater reward. But, this does not contradict the greater virtue of offering salāh at home. An example of this is witr salāh. Delaying it until the end of the night is better. But the one who isn't confident about waking up should offer it earlier.

Now, the general practice of Muslims is to offer the sunnah in the Masājid. This has its benefits, such as the tranquility found in Masājid is not the same as in the homes. Moreover, going against the common practice results in criticism, finger-pointing, spreading suspicion, and it opens the door to backbiting. Hence, because this ruling is at the level of Mustahab, the consideration of these benefits is given preference over this.

(Fatāwa Razawiyah, Vol. 07, p. 415-416, Publ. Razā Foundation, Lahore)

The renowned commentator of Bukhārī, Muftī Sharīf-Ul-Ḥaq Amjadī رحمۃ اللہ علیہ states:

نفل نماز گھر میں پڑھنا بہ نسبت مسجد کے افضل ہے کہ نوافل میں إخفاء اور ستر زیادہ اچھا ہے تاکہ ریاء و نمود کو دخل نہ ہو۔ لیکن آج کل مساجد ہی میں نوافل کا عام رواج ہو گیا ہے اگر کوئی مسجد میں نفل نہ پڑھے، تو عوام اسے متہم کر دیں گے، اس لئے عوام کو بدگمانی سے بچانے کے لئے مسجد ہی میں پڑھنا ایک حد تک ضروری ہے۔

Translation: Offering nafl salāh at home is superior to offering it in the masjid as seclusion and being hidden is preferred in nawāfil so that there is no involvement of ostentation and showoff. But, offering nawāfil in the masājid has become common nowadays. If one does not offer nafl in the masjid, people will accuse them. Hence, offering it in the masjid in order to protect people from negative assumptions has become crucial to a certain extent.

(Nuzhah al-Qārī Sharḥ Sahīh al-Bukhārī, Vol. 02, p. 380, Summarized, Publ. Farīd Bookstall, Lahore)

وَاللّٰهُ اَعْلَمُ عَزَّوَجَلَّ وَرَسُوْلُهُ اَعْلَمُ صَلَّى اللّٰهُ تَعَالٰی عَلَیْهِ وَاٰلِهٖ وَسَلَّم

(Allah Almighty knows best and His Messenger صَلَّى اللّٰهُ عَلَیْهِ وَاٰلِهٖ وَسَلَّم knows best.)

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