

I'tikāf: Seclusion in the masjid for the Last Ten days of Ramadan

Compiled by the Ulama of Shariah Board, New York

Man, constantly involved in worldly affairs, social problems and personal commitments, easily forgets the actual purpose of his noble creation. Evil thoughts capture his heart and mind to such an extent that he becomes unable to think positively and even going to the Masjid and fasting does not bring about any changes. As a result, his *salah* is full of worldly thoughts and his fasting is wasted in useless discussions. This creates a disheartening and deplorable condition for the Muslim community in general and for the pious people in particular.

The only way to avoid the wrath of Allah ﷻ, the Almighty Lord, and to be benefited by His mercy is to be present oneself in His house with full commitment, zeal and submission. This spirit of love, hope and begging for more mercy is found in i'tikāf.

I'tikāf is a *sunnah muakkadah 'ala l'kifayah*, or emphasized *sunnah* upon the community. This means it is not obligatory on every Muslim but if at least one person from the community performs it, the rest can be saved from the sin of discarding the *sunnah*. However, this *shar'i* ruling does not affect its significance or benefits. It is a great mercy of Allah ﷻ that it is not mandatory for every Muslim. Otherwise, it would have been very difficult. Rather it is a *sunnah*, keeping the necessities and ease of the common Muslims in mind, while the true seekers of the nearness of Allah ﷻ can benefit from this great *'ibādah*.

The fact of the matter is that the real blessings of the most valuable moments of Ramadan can only be attained in i'tikāf. Regardless of how enthusiastic a person is, he gets tired after sometime and the consistency of *'ibādah* stops. However, i'tikāf is such an *'ibādah* that even if a person is not praying or engaged in any type of *zhikr* while in the masjid, he is still considered to be in *'ibādah*. Therefore, not a single moment of his time is wasted and he gets the reward of good deeds while simply sitting in the masjid. Therefore, Abdullah bin Abbas ؓ narrates a from the Messenger of Allah ﷺ, **“The *mu'takif* (person performing i'tikāf) is safe from sins and he is indeed given the same reward as those who do righteous deeds (in spite of not having done these deeds) as a result of being secluded in the masjid”**. (Ibn Maajah)

In another hadith the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, **“Whoever observes i'tikāf for one day seeking Allah's pleasure, Allah creates between him and the fire of Hell, three trenches, the width of each greater than the distance between the heaven and the earth”** (al-Mustadrak and at-Tabarani). It is also a proven that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ did not miss i'tikāf his lifetime ever since the command for it was revealed. In another hadith, it is stated, **“Whoever observes i'tikāf for ten days of Ramadan, gets a reward equivalent to that of two Hajj and two Umrahs”** (al-Baihaqi).

For a small amount of sacrifice, Allah ﷻ bestows His magnificent bounties and blessings as an honor. If one gets a chance to spend a few days in the residence of a renowned leader or celebrity, he would consider it an honor and would proudly inform his friends and family about



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it. Consider, thereafter, the honor of staying in the house of the Lord of the Universe, the King of all kings. The honor is incomparable.

There is a considerable spiritual refreshment and uplifting that comes due to spending a few days in this environment. The increased strength in *iman* is clearly felt. In reality, one is fortunate enough to perform ‘ibadah in *Lailatul Qadr*, or the Night of Power, due to his i’tikāf.

Unfortunately, even though it has so many virtues and benefits, the practice of i’tikāf is gradually diminishing from society. Although Muslims make special arrangements in the month of Ramadan for salah in congregation and the nightly Taraweeh prayer, the interest towards i’tikāf according to the Sunnah is much less. Seemingly, the reason is that there is much time spent in preparation for Eid so that no wishes remain unfulfilled. Many are so preoccupied with their businesses and worldly pursuits, they cannot spare even ten days for this significant ‘ibadah. This is indeed is a major loss.

The purpose is not to i’tikāf compulsory upon every Muslim, rather at least one person from every Muslim family should make an arrangement for it. Thus, the significance of this Ibadah will be revived among the Muslim communities and its positive effects will be felt by one and all, *inshaa-Allah*.

Youngsters should especially make an intention to perform i’tikāf because it will keep them away from many societal evils and will provide them an environment of a proper upbringing according to the Deen.

Therefore, before the start of the last last ten days of Ramadan, all masjid should make special arrangements for this vital ‘ibadah, so that the awareness develops among Muslim communities and all masjid are filled up with performers of i’tikāf.

May Allah ﷻ guide us all and help us in such pursuits, āmīn!