

I'TIKAAF

I'tik'af means to stay in the masjid with the niyyah of i'tikaaf for the sake of Allah Ta'ala. The purpose of such stay in the masjid is ibaadah and to gain proximity to Allah Ta'ala.

SUNNATUL MUAKKADAH I'TIKAF

I'tikaaf of the last ten days of Ramadhaan is the only masnoon i'tikaaf. This masnoon i'tikaaf is Sunnatul Muakkadah alal Kifaayah. If a few, or even just one person observes this I'tikaf in a particular area/neighborhood, the duty will be discharged on behalf of the entire community of that locality. On the other hand, if no one observes this i'tikaaf, the whole community will be guilty of neglecting a sunnatul muakkadah obligation. Such neglect is sinful.

1. The Mu'takif (the one who observes I'tikaaf) will enter the masjid before sunset of the 20th day of Ramadhaan.
2. The Mu'takif will remain in the masjid until the sighting of the moon for Eid.
3. Niyyah (making intention) is a necessary condition for masnoon i'tikaaf.
4. If the masnoon i'tikaaf is broken or nullified, Qadha of it is obligatory.

THE VENUE FOR I'TIKAF

1. For men. i'tikaaf is valid in only a masjid in which adhaan and iqamah are proclaimed for the five daily salaah. In other words it has to be a masjid in which the five daily salaah are performed with congregation.
2. Females can observe i'tikaaf in a place in their homes, set aside for salaah or specially cordoned off for the purpose of i'tikaaf.
3. It is not permissible for women to come to the masjid to observe i'tikaaf.
4. The wudhu area, courtyard, kitchen, store-rooms and any other adjacent buildings are all excluded from the masjid.
5. It is essential that the mu'takif remains inside the masjid or inside the special place set aside at home (for women) throughout the duration of the i'tikaaf. Leaving the place of i'tikaf unnecessarily for even a minute will render the i'tikaf null and void.

VALID REASONS FOR LEAVING THE MUSJID AND WHICH WILL NOT BREAK THE I'TIKAF

It is permissible to leave the masjid for the following acts of need:

1. To answer the call of nature - to go to the toilet.
2. To take an obligatory bath
3. To make wudhu
4. Juma'h salaah, if Juma'h salaah is not performed in the masjid where the i'tikaaf is being observed. In this case the mu'takif should leave the masjid at such a time to enable him to reach the other masjid in time to perform his sunnah salaah. He should leave immediately after having completed the six raka'ats sunnats after the fardh salaah. He should not delay for du'a and dhikr.

5. To proclaim the adhaan, if he is the muadh-dhin. This is permissible for even a mu'takif who is not the permanent Muadh-dhin.
6. To bring food if there is no one to tend to this need of his.
7. If one is compelled to leave the masjid either because of danger or forceful eviction, one may immediately proceed to another masjid to continue with the i'tikaaf. An unnecessary delay in the process of changing masjids is not permissible and will break the i'tikaaf. When leaving the masjid for the above mentioned reasons, the mu'takif must return to the masjid immediately after having fulfilled the need. An unnecessary delay of even a minute will break the i'tikaf.

THE MUFSIDAT OR THE THINGS WHICH INVALIDATE (BREAK) THE I'TIKAF

Unnecessarily leaving the masjid for even a minute whether intentionally, unintentionally or under compulsion, will invalidate the i'tikaf. All acts and reasons besides the valid reasons (see above) will be regarded as 'unnecessary' in the context of i'tikaf. Thus, leaving the masjid due to illness, although permissible, will invalidate the i'tikaf. To leave the masjid for janazah salaah, visiting the sick or for any other permissible activity besides the VALID REASONS (see below), will render the i'tikaaf null and void.

The i'tikaaf will also become void (break - be invalid) if the mu'takif's fast breaks.

THE MUBAHAAT OR THE THINGS WHICH ARE PERMISSIBLE DURING I'TIKAF

During i'tikaf, the following acts are mubah (permissible):

1. To eat and drink.
2. To sleep.
3. Necessary conversation.
4. To change clothes and apply perfume and oil.
5. To cut hair and nails. These should not be allowed to fall in the Masjid.
6. To walk inside the masjid.
7. To sit anywhere inside the masjid.
8. To tend to a sick person inside the masjid.
9. If necessary, to buy and sell goods provided that the goods are not brought into the masjid nor is payment made inside the masjid.
10. To teach deeni lessons.
11. To sew clothing.
12. To study deeni books.
13. To get married and to perform a nikah.
14. All such acts which are lawful and allowed in the masjid are permissible for the mu'takif.

THE MAKRUHAT OR THE THINGS WHICH ARE DETESTABLE AND NOT PERMISSIBLE FOR THE MU'TAKIF

The makruhat during i'tikaf are as follows:

1. To maintain total silence.
2. To indulge in idle talk.
3. To sleep excessively merely to wile away the time.
4. To unnecessarily pass wind inside the masjid.
5. To sew garments or engage in any occupation for a fee.
6. To read books and magazines which are not of a deeni nature.
7. To erect the mu'takaf in a way which inconveniences the musallees. (Mu'takaf is the area which is enclosed for the sleeping and eating of the one who observes i'tikaf).
8. To engage in any worldly activity unnecessarily.

WHAT TO DO DURING I'TIKAF

The mu'takif should engage himself in ibaadah to the best of his ability. Nafl salaah, tilawah (Recitation of Qur'an), Durood, Istighfar and permanent dhikr in general should be the mu'takif's occupations throughout the duration of his i'tikaaf.

When the mu'takif speaks, he must speak only what is virtue or what is necessary.

The mu'takif should not do anything which conflicts with the spirit of i'tikaf. He should guard his heart, mind, ears, eyes and limbs against all evil, thus deriving maximum benefit from his seclusion in the masjid.

The mu'takif is the guest of Allah. He should therefore, be careful of his behavior in the House of Allah.

MASAAIL (RULES) PERTAINING TO I'TIKAF

1. The same rules which apply to a man observing i'tikaaf in the masjid, apply to a woman observing i'tikaaf in her place of seclusion at home.
2. When necessity, e.g. Juma' Salaah in another masjid, compels the mu'takif to leave his masjid, it will be permissible for him to enquire about a sick person or generally engage in good conversation without departing from the road. He must not unnecessarily stop on the road.
3. During i'tikaaf it is not permissible to leave the masjid for even a sunnah ghusl.
4. It is permissible for the muadh-dhin who is in i'tikaf to enter the minaret for the adhaan.
5. Whilst standing inside the masjid it is permissible for the mu'takif to protrude his head out of the window.
6. Emission of semen, e.g. in a wet dream, does not invalidate the i'tikaaf.
7. A woman's i'tikaaf is proper if she has the consent of her husband.
8. The i'tikaf of a child who understands the meaning of i'tikaaf, is valid. Bulooah (puberty) is not a condition for the validity of i'tikaaf.

9. It is permissible to sleep on a bed in the mu'takaf (the place cordoned off for sleeping and eating).
10. The mu'takaf should remain at all times with wudhu. If his wudhu breaks, it will be permissible for him to leave the masjid for the purpose of wudhu, even if it is not yet time for salaah. After making wudhu, he should perform at least two raka'at Tahiyatul-wudhu. Similarly, it will be permissible for him to leave the masjid to make wudhu at night to enable him to sleep with wudhu.
11. If for some reason the i'tikaaf of Ramadhaan was rendered void (broken), it will not be necessary to leave the masjid. The remaining days may still be observed and Qadha of the day/s rendered void should be made.

VIRTUES OF I'TIKAAF

Ibn Maajah narrated from Ibn 'Abbaas that the Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said concerning the person who observes i'tikaaf: "He is refraining from sin and he will be given a reward like that of one who does all kinds of good deeds."

al-Tabaraani, al-Haakim and al-Bayhaqi narrated the following from Ibn 'Abbaas, The Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said: "Whoever observes i'tikaaf for one day seeking thereby the Face of Allaah, Allaah will place between him and the Fire three ditches wider than the distance between the east and the west."

al-Daylami narrated from 'Aa'ishah that the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said: "Whoever observes i'tikaaf out of faith and in the hope of reward will be forgiven his previous sins."

Al-Bayhaqi narrated the following report from al-Husayn ibn 'Ali (may Allaah be pleased with him), the Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said: "Whoever observes i'tikaaf for ten days in Ramadaan, that will be equivalent to two Hajjs and two 'Umrahs.

A SUGGESTED TIMETABLE

In order to maximise our time and perform our 'ibaadah with ease, we should try to follow a set routine or timetable.

1. We must wake up for suhoor as it is a sunnah of our Rasool (*Sallallaahu Alayhi Wasallam*). He has informed us that the food of suhoor is full of barakah: "Eat suhoor, because in it lie great blessings." (Bukhari, Muslim)

We should arrange our time for suhoor in such a way that we are also able to perform at least 4-8 rak'at of tahajjud together with du'a. Rasoolullah (*Sallallaahu Alayhi Wasallam*) has said that the du'a in the darkness of the night (after tahajjud) is readily accepted by Allah. (Tirmizi) The ideal way to perform tahajjud with suhoor is to wake up early and perform tahajjud and make du'a before suhoor. Shed tears and ask Allah ta'ala for your

needs just as a small child cries and gets his needs fulfilled. Rasoolullah (*Sallallahu Alayhi Wasallam*) has encouraged his followers to cry when making du'a. Crying and weeping attracts mercy. Just as a mother who, upon seeing her child crying for a sweet, will succumb at the sight of the child's crying and treat it with mercy, similarly when one sheds tears whilst beseeching his Lord, the Mercy of the Lord will enshroud him.

2. After tahajjud and suhoor, we must pray our Fajr salaah with congregation. (After the adhaan, pray 2 sunnah, and 2 fard in congregation)
3. After Fajr remain engaged in 'ibadat. Recite Surah Yaseen, comprehensive supplications (page 53), the 99 names of Allah (page 77), send salutations upon the Prophet SAW (page 85), and Sayyid al Istighfar (page 68) until 10 minutes after sunrise. (page 91)
4. Perform Salaah al Ishraq (page 94)

Virtues of Ishraq

Anas رضي الله عنه narrates that the Rasoolallah صلى الله عليه وسلم has said: The person who did his Salat al Fajr with Jama'ah and kept sitting till sunrise doing Dhikr of Allaah **عز وجل** and then performed two raka'ah of Salah will receive thawaab {reward} of 1 Hajj and 1 Umrah. The narrator Hadrat Anas رضي الله عنه has mentioned that after this the Rasoolallah صلى الله عليه وسلم said: "Thawaab of one full Hajj and Umrah, full Hajj and Umrah, full Hajj and Umrah. {Tirmidhi - Mishkat }

Rasoolallah صلى الله عليه وسلم has said: The person who after finishing his Salat al Fajr, continues sitting at his place till the sun rises and then performs 2 raka'ah of Salat al Ishraq and in-between does speak but good, has his sins forgiven though they are more than the foam of a river. {Abu Dawood- Mishkat}

5. Rest, if you need to, and wake up around 10:00AM- Perform Wudhu, and perform Salat al Duha (page 95)

Rasoolallah sallallahu alayhi wasallam said, 'There is charity on each joint of every one of you in the morning. To say subhanallah once is charity, to say alhamdulillah is also charity, to say laa ilaaha illallah is also charity, to command goodness and forbid evil is also charity, and two rak'at at the time of duha is sufficient for all his charity.' (Muslim)

6. Stay busy with the recitation of the Quran. One should recite at least 4 Juz per day, in order to make sure that one recitation is complete by the end of the 9 or 10 days.
7. Perform Zuhr with congregation. (After the adhaan, pray 4 Sunnah, 4 Fard in congregation, 2 Sunnah, and 2 Nafl) If possible, engage in 'Ibaadat for a while and have a short rest with the intention of qaylulah - a Sunnah of our beloved Nabee (*Sallallahu Alayhi Wasallam*).
8. Perform Asr. (After the adhaan, pray 4 Sunnah, and 4 Fard in congregation) The time between Asr and Maghrib is very valuable especially for Du'a. Rasoolallah sallallahu alayhi wasallam said, 'There are three groups of people whose Du'a is not rejected; the fasting person until he breaks the fast'. (Ahmad)

After Asr we must engage in zikr, tilawat, tasbeeh, etc. until just 15-20 minutes before Maghrib when we should raise our hands in Du'a until adhaan. In this way, everyone will be engrossed in their own 'ibaadat and we will find that if some of the individuals are crying others will also get the inclination to do the same. Therefore value this time between Asr and Maghrib.

9. After performing Maghrib, we should perform 6 Rak'at of awwabeen after the two Rak'at sunnat. (Page 95) However, those who do not feel inclined to do this, some Ulama have said that two rak'at sunnat and two rak'at nafl of Maghrib can also become part of the 6 rak'at awwabeen. Hence, performing only two rak'at after the sunnat and nafl of Maghrib will suffice.
10. Go for dinner.
11. Thereafter return to the masjid and engage yourself in 'ibadat. Take great care not to get involved in any worldly talk. It is very upsetting and disheartening to see people wasting their time in futile talk in the masjid even during the month of Ramadhan. Try and restrain yourself and remain engaged in 'Ibadat until 'Isha. (After the adhaan, pray 4 Sunnah, then 4 fard in congregation, followed by 2 sunnah)
12. Pray all 20 Rakats of Taraweeh, including Witr in congregation. In the month of Ramadhan, the best time to pray Witr is immediately after Taraweeh, as this is the only time in which Witr is performed in congregation.

- Please keep in mind that the Masjid is the House of Allah, and it is our responsibility to keep it clean and tidy. If you see something that is out of place, please put it in its place. If you see that vacuuming is needed, please go ahead and do it. If you see that the garbage needs to be emptied, please go ahead and do it.

Remember!! Each Sunnah is equal to a Fard, so none of our Sunnah's should be missed, and each Fard is equal to 70 Fard. We should not miss our prayers in congregation. We should make wudu early, pray our sunnah, and be ready to begin our prayer with the Imam, in the first row. Allah's Mercy is in abundance throughout the year, especially during this month. We should yearn in our hearts for this Mercy because we need mercy, blessing and forgiveness from Allah. We are sinful and in this month we want to win Allah's Attention so that we can become His Beloved Slaves. If we are eager to perform good deeds then, insha'allah this month will become a month of great blessing for us.

NOTE: Everyone should try to take rest in order to conserve energy for the compulsory ibaadat. There is no point in remaining in nafl 'ibaadat and not getting rest, which will result in tiredness and laziness at the time of compulsory Salaat, etc. Hence, every person should fix a convenient time for rest and include it in the timetable set out above.

May Allah accept our efforts and make every moment of this month a means of receiving His Mercy, Blessing and Forgiveness. May we all be granted a place in Jannah. Aameen.