

CONGREGATIONAL SUPPLICATION

Q: 13- "It is noticed lately in some mosques, that supplications (Du'a) is offered in congregation, lead by the Imam with loud and piercing voice, a sight frequently observed in normal days, and particularly during Ramadan in the Lailatul-Qadr. Is there any justification for such congregational prayers in Shariah? If not, what is the prescribed way for the person leading the prayers (imam) to make supplication?

A: Congregational supplication, is never reported to be performed by the Holy Prophet saw. in the manner explained in your question. It appears from the relevant ahadith that in the days of the Holy Prophet he used to pray on his own, even after salah. But at the same time there is no clear injunction in the Holy Qur'an or in the Sunnah which prohibits such congregational supplication. In view of both these aspects, the correct position is that congregational supplications are neither a sunnah nor something prohibited. It is only one of the several permissible ways of performing supplications.

However, if somebody takes this congregational method as obligatory or as a sunnah of the Holy Prophet saw, then this wrong concept will render this practice a "bid'ah" (innovation), hence impermissible, because a practice which was not obligatory or a sunnah at the time of the Holy Prophet saw, cannot be held as such after him. It will be a self-coined addition to the prescribed ways of worship, which is termed as bid'ah in the words of the Holy Prophet saw. and is strictly prohibited.

In the light of this principle, if the congregational way of supplication is adopted only for the convenience of the audience, without taking this particular manner as an obligatory method or a sunnah of the Holy Prophets it is quite permissible in Shariah. But if this method is observed with a belief of its being obligatory or a sunnah, it is not allowed.

It is noticed that where congregational supplications are permanently observed, it sometimes creates an impression that such collective supplication is a necessary part of the salah, since this impression is not correct, as discussed earlier, it is advisable to avoid congregational form of supplication at frequent occasions, and to educate the people about the correct position as mentioned above.

Contemporary fatawaa