31819 - What Is ‘Umrah?

the question

I want to know about `Umrah in detail.

Summary of answer

`Umrah is composed of four things, namely: ihram, circumambulation of the Sacred House (tawaf), sa`i between al-Safa and al-Marwah, and shaving the head or cutting the hair.

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

Conditions of accepting acts of worship

An act of worship cannot be accepted unless it meets two conditions:

1. Sincerity towards Allah Alone, i.e., it is done to seek the Countenance of Allah and the Hereafter, and is not done to show off, to enhance one’s reputation or for worldly gain.
2. Following the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) in word and deed. Following the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) can only be achieved by knowing his Sunnah

Hence the one who wants to worship Allah by doing any act of worship – Hajj or anything else – has to learn the teachings of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) concerning it, so that his actions will be in accordance with the Sunnah.

What is ‘Umrah?

We will sum up in these few lines the description of `Umrah as narrated in the Sunnah.

`Umrah is composed of four things, namely: ihram, circumambulation of the Sacred House (tawaf), sa`i between al-Safa and al-Marwah, and shaving the head or cutting the hair.

Ihram

Ihram means having the intention of starting the rituals of Hajj or `Umrah .

When the pilgrim wants to enter ihram , he should change his clothes and do ghusl like the ghusl done to cleanse oneself of janabah (impurity following sexual activity). Then he should apply whatever perfume is available, musk or whatever, to his head and beard. It does not matter if traces of that perfume remain after he enters ihram, because of the hadith narrated in al-Sahihayn from `Aishah (may Allah be pleased with her) who said: When the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) wanted to enter ihram, he would perfume himself with the best perfume he could find, then I would see shining traces of that musk on his head and beard after that." (Narrated by al-Bukhari, 271; Muslim, 1190)

Doing ghusl when entering ihram is Sunnah for both men and women, even women who are bleeding following childbirth or menstruating, because the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) commanded Asma bint 'Umays when she was bleeding following childbirth to do ghusl when she entered ihram, and to bandage her private parts and enter ihram. (Narrated by Muslim, 1209)

Then after doing ghusl and putting on perfume, the pilgrim should put on the ihram garments and – apart from women who are bleeding following childbirth or menstruating – pray the obligatory prayer if that is at the time of an obligatory prayer, otherwise they should pray two rak'ahs with the intention of the Sunnah prayer of wudu. When the pilgrim has finished praying he should face the qiblah and enter ihram. He may delay ihram until he has boarded his means of transportation, and is ready to move off, but he should enter ihram before he leaves the miqat for Makkah.

Then he should say, Labbayk Allahumma bi `Umrah (Here I am, O Allah, for `Umrah).

Then he should recite the Talbiyah as the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) did:

“Labbayka Allahumma labbayk , labbayka la sharika laka labbayk. Inna al-hamd wa’l-ni’mata laka wa’l-mulk, la sharika lak (Here I am, O Allah, here I am. Here I am, You have no partner, here I am. Verily all praise and blessings are Yours, and all sovereignty, You have no partner).”

The Talbiyah of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) also included the words, “Labbayka ilah al-haqq (Here I am, O God of Truth).”

Ibn `Umar used to add to the Talbiyah the words, “Labbayk wa sa’dayka, wa’l-khayr bi yadayka, wa’l-raghba ilayka wa’l-‘aml (Here I am and blessed by You, and all good is in Your Hands, and desire and action are directed towards You).”

Men should raise their voices when saying that, because the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: “Jibril came to me and told me to tell my Companions and those who are with me to raise their voices when reciting the Talbiyah.” (Classed as sahih by al-Albani in Sahih Abi Dawud, 1599) And he (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: “The best of Hajj is that in which voices are raised in the Talbiyah and the blood of the sacrificial animal flows.” (Classed as hasan by al-Albani in Sahih al-Jami’, 1112)

A woman should recite in such a manner that those who are beside her can hear it, unless there is a man beside her who is not one of her mahrams, in which case she should recite it silently.

If the person who is entering ihram fears some obstacle that may prevent him from completing his pilgrimage (such as sickness, an enemy, being stopped from proceeding any further, etc), then he should stipulate a condition when entering ihram by saying, “If I am prevented then my exiting ihram is where I am prevented” – i.e., if something prevents me from completing my pilgrimage such as sickness or delay etc, then I will exit my ihram. The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) commanded Duba’ah bint al-Zubayr, when she wanted to enter ihram but she was sick, to stipulate such a condition, and he said, “Your condition is valid with your Lord.” (Narrated by al-Bukhari, 5089, and Muslim, 1207)

If he stipulates this condition and something happens to prevent him from completing his pilgrimage, then he can exit his ihram and does not have to do anything (i.e., offer a sacrifice in

compensation).

But the one who does not fear that some obstacle may prevent him from completing his pilgrimage does not have to stipulate any conditions, because the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) did not stipulate conditions nor did he command everyone to do so. Rather he told Duba'ah bint al-Zubayr to do that because she was sick.

The muhrim (person who has entered ihram) should recite the Talbiyah a great deal, especially when circumstances and times change, such as when going up to a high place or going down to a low place, or when night or day begin. After that he should ask Allah for His good pleasure and for Paradise, and seek refuge in His Mercy from the Fire.

The Talbiyah is prescribed in `Umrah from the moment one enters ihram until one starts tawaf. When he starts tawaf he should stop reciting the Talbiyah.

- Ghusl when entering Makkah

When the pilgrim approaches Makkah, he should do ghusl before entering, if possible, because the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) did ghusl when he entered Makkah. Narrated by Muslim, 1259.

Tawaf

Then when he enters al-Masjid al-Haram he should do so with his right foot first, and say, "Bismillah wa'l-salatu wa'l-salam 'ala Rasul-Allah. Allahumma ighfir li dhunubi waftah li abwab rahmatika. A'udhu Billah il-'Azim wa bi wajhih il-karim wa bi sultanih il-'qadim min al-Shaytan il-rajim (In the name of Allah, and blessings and peace be upon the Messenger of Allah. O Allah, forgive me my sins and open to me the gates of Your mercy. I seek refuge with Allah the Almighty and in His noble Countenance and His eternal power from the accursed Satan)." Then he should go to the Black Stone in order to start tawaf . He should touch the Stone with his right hand and kiss it; if he cannot kiss it then he should touch it with his hand and kiss his hand. If he cannot touch it with his hand then he should face the Stone and point to it with his hand and say "Allahu akbar",

but he should not kiss his hand.

There is a great deal of virtue in touching the Black Stone , because the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: “Allah will raise up the Black Stone on the Day of Resurrection and it will have two eyes with which it will see and a tongue with which it will speak, and it will bear witness for those who touched it in sincerity.” (Classed as sahih by al-Albani in Sahih al-Targhib wa’l-Tarhib, 1144)

It is better not to crowd around and cause annoyance to people or be annoyed by them, because of the hadith in which the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said to ‘Umar: “O `Umar, you are a strong man, do not crowd around the Stone and disturb the weak. If you find space, then touch it, otherwise just face it and say ‘Allahu akbar.’” (Narrated by Ahmad, 191; classed as qawiy by al-Albani in Risalat Manasik al-Hajj wa’l-`Umrah, p. 21)

Then he should move towards the right, with the Ka’bah on his left, and when he reaches the Yemeni Corner (al-Rukn al-Yamani, which is the third corner after the Black Stone) he should touch it, without kissing his hand or saying “Allahu akbar”. If he cannot touch it then he should move on, and not crowd around it. Between the Yemeni Corner and the Black Stone he should say, “Rabbana atina fi’l-dunya hasanah wa fi’l-akhirah hasanah wa qinna ‘adhab al-Nar (Our Lord! Give us in this world that which is good and in the Hereafter that which is good, and save us from the torment of the Fire).” Narrated by Abu Dawud and classed as hasan by al-Albani in Sahih Abi Dawud, 1666.

Every time he passes the Black Stone he should face it and say ‘Allahu akbar’, and in the rest of his tawaf he should recite whatever he likes of dhikr, du`a and Quran, because tawaf around the Ka’bah has been established for the remembrance of Allah.

- In tawaf men should do two things:

1. Uncover the right shoulder (idtiba`) from the beginning of tawaf until the end. This is done by placing the middle of the rida (upper garment) beneath the right armpit and the ends of the rida over the left shoulder. When the pilgrim finishes tawaf, he should put his rida back as it

was before tawaf, because the time for wearing it with one shoulder uncovered is only in tawaf.

2. Raml in the first three circuits only. Raml means walking quickly with short steps. In the last four circuits there is no raml, rather the pilgrim should walk normally.

When the pilgrim has completed seven circuits of tawaf, he should cover his right shoulder and then go to the Station of Ibrahim (Maqam Ibrahim) and recite the words (interpretation of the meaning):

"And take you (people) the Maqam (place) of Ibrahim (Abraham) [or the stone on which Ibrahim (Abraham) stood while he was building the Ka'bah] as a place of prayer (for some of your prayers, e.g. two Rak'at after the tawaf of the Ka'bah at Makkah)," [Al-Baqarah 2:125]

Then he should pray two rak'ahs behind the Station; in the first rak'ah after reciting al-Fatihah he should recite Ya ayyaha'l-kafirun (Surat al-Kafirun 109) and in the second Qul Huwa Allahu ahad (Surat al-Ikhlas 112). Then when he has finished this prayer he should go to the Black Stone and touch it if he can. It is prescribed at this point to touch it only; if he cannot do that then he should go away and not point to it.

Sa`i

Then he should go out to the Mas'a (place for sa`i) and when he comes near to al-Safa he should recite (interpretation of the meaning):

"Verily, As-Safa and Al-Marwah (two mountains in Makkah) are of the Symbols of Allah." [Al-Baqarah 2:158]

And he should say: "Nabda-u bima bada-a Allah bihi (We start with that with which Allah started)."

Then he should climb al-Safa until he can see the Ka`bah, then he should face it and raise his hands and praise Allah, and make du`a as he wishes. The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) used to say: "La ilaha ill-Allah wahdahu la sharika lah, lahu'l-mulk, wa lahu'l-hamd, wa huwa 'ala kulli shay-in qadir. La ilaha ill-Allah wahdah, anjaza wa'dah, wa nasara 'abdah, wa

hazama al-ahzaba wahdah (There is no god but Allah Alone, with no partner or associate; His is the Dominion, all praise is due to Him, and He is able to do all things. There is no god but Allah Alone; he fulfilled His promise, granted victory to His slave, and defeated the confederates alone).” (Narrated by Muslim, 1218)

He should repeat that three times, and make du`a in between. He should recite this dhikr then make du`a, then recite it again and make du`a, and recite it a third time, then come down to al-Marwah, and not make du`a after the third time.

When he reaches the green marker he should run as quickly as he can without disturbing anyone, because it was proven that the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) did sa`i between al-Safa and al-Marwah, and he said, “The river bed is not crossed except with vigour.” (Narrated by Ibn Majah and classed as sahih by al-Albani in Sahih Ibn Majah, 2419) The river bed [it was a dried river bed in the time of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him)] is the area between the two green markers that stand there now.

When he reaches the second green marker, he should walk normally until he reaches al-Marwah. He should climb up it and turn to face the qiblah, and raise his hands and say what he said at al-Safa. Then he should come down from al-Marwah and head for al-Safa, walking in the place of walking and running in the place of running. When he reaches al-Safa he should do what he did the first time, and the same when he goes back to al-Marwah, until he has completed seven circuits; going from al-Safa to al-Marwah is one circuit, and coming back from al-Marwah to al-Safa is another circuit. During his sa`i he can say whatever he likes or dhikr and du`a, and recite Quran.

Note: The verse (interpretation of the meaning): “Verily, As-Safa and Al-Marwah (two mountains in Makkah) are of the Symbols of Allah” [Al-Baqarah 2:158] should be recited by the pilgrim who wants to perform sa`i when he approaches al-Safa at the beginning of sa`i only. It is not mustahabb to repeat it every time he approaches al-Safa and al-Marwah, as some people do.

Shaving the head or cutting the hair

When he has completed seven circuits (of sa`i) he should shave his head if he is a man, or cut

some of his hair . If he shaves his head he must shave his entire head, and if he cuts his hair he must cut from all over his head. Shaving is better than cutting because the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) made du`a three times for those who shaved their heads and once for those who cut their hair. (Narrated by Muslim, 1303)

Women should cut the length of a fingertip from their hair.

With these actions, `Umrah is complete. So `Umrah consists of ihram, tawaf, sa`i and shaving the head or cutting the hair.

We ask Allah to help us to do righteous deeds, and to accept them from us, for He is Ever Near and responds to our prayers.

- References:

1- Manasik al-Hajj wa'l-`Umrah by al-Albani [Available in English as The Rites of Hajj and `Umrah, published by International Islamic Publishing House, Riyadh]

2- Sifat al-Hajj wa'l-`Umrah and al-Manhaj li Mureed al-`Umrah wa'l-Hajj by Ibn 'Uthaymin (may Allah have mercy on them all)

And Allah knows best.