38162 - Is there a difference in the way men and women prostrate?

the question

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Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

Some of the scholars are of the view that men and woman should pray differently, and they quote a number of ahaadeeth as evidence for that, but these are all da'eef (weak) and cannot be taken as evidence.

See the answer to question no. 9276.

But the correct view is that there is no difference in the way men and women pray.

Shaykh Muhammad ibn 'Uthaymeen said, refuting the view of the fuqaha' that "women should not spread their arms out, rather they should keep them close to their sides and when they prostrate they should press their stomachs to their thighs and their thighs to their calves… because they should conceal themselves, and compressing themselves is more concealing than spreading out." Ibn 'Uthaymeen (may Allaah have mercy on him) said:

This may be answered in several ways:

1 – This reason cannot stand up against the general meaning of the texts which indicate that women are like men with regard to rulings, especially since the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said: "Pray as you have seen me praying," and this is addressed in general terms, including both men and women.

2 – This reason is redundant because usually, as is prescribed, women pray alone in their houses with no men present. In that case there is no need for them to compress themselves, so long as no

men can see them.

3 – You say that she raises her hands, and raising the hands is more likely to uncover than spreading the arms when prostrating. But despite that you say that it is Sunnah for her to raise her hands, because the basic principle is that the rulings apply equally to men and women.

The correct view is:

Women should do the same things that men do in the prayer, so they should raise their hands and spread their arms out when prostrating, and make their backs level when bowing and lift their stomachs up off their thighs, and their thighs up off their calves, when prostrating… they should sit on the left foot with the right foot held upright when sitting between the two prostrations and in the first tashahhud. In the last tashahhud of the prayer there is only one tashahhud, and they should sit mutawarrikan (with the left upper thigh on the ground and both feet protruding from one (the right) side) during the final tashahhud of three- and four-rak'ah prayers.

There are no exceptions for women in any of these matters.

Al-Sharh al-Mumti', 3/304, 303

Shaykh al-Albaani (may Allaah have mercy on him) said, at the end of his book Sifat Salaat al-Nabi (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) (The Prophet's Prayer Described):

"All that has been mentioned of the description of the Prophet's prayer (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) applies equally to men and women, for there is nothing in the Sunnah to necessitate the exception of women from any of these descriptions; in fact, the generality of his statement (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him), 'Pray as you have seen me praying', includes women"

If we assume that a woman is praying in a public place where men may see her, such as in the Haram in Makkah, or in a park – if she has to pray there – then she should be careful with regard to every action that may lead to uncovering any part of her, and take extra precautions in this case. And Allaah knows best.