THE METHOD OF ISTIKHARA ACCORDING TO SUNNAH

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ABSTRACT

Everyone needs a guideline whether he lives in a Muslim society or he is the inhabitant of the non-Muslim society, so that he should lead a successful life. Almighty Allah sent messengers for the guidance and showing right path to the human beings. They imparted awareness to the people that this earthly life is not a reality but the life after death is the undying reality. Life on earth means to achieve the real life, so that our matter must follow the direction of life hereafter. Our Holy Prophet (S.W.A) was sent last of all messengers who was entrusted the sacred duty of universal direction for all people living in any part of earth. This honorable sort of direction and guidance has been given for the people till the Day of Judgment. Our Holy prophet (S.W.A) has imparted the education of Istikhara for the betterment of future and avoidance of losses to the “Ummah”. The tendency of making mess of Sharai style of life and tenets of shariah among the Muslim Ummah have not only spared pious practice of Istikhara but many ambiguous and controversial ways have been used for this pious action of Istikhara. So it is the imperative of time to let the “Ummah” be told what the significance of Istikhara is and how it ought to be performed. This research paper elucidates the true method of Istikhara according to Sunnah in practical details.

Keywords: Istikhara, Muslim Society, Messenger, Muslim Ummah, Sunnah

INTRODUCTION

The ultimate objective of the believers is the love and passion for Allah Almighty. The proper method of attaining this objective has been narrated by Rasoolullah (S.A.W). Because Allah Almighty sent him (S.A.W) as a messenger with the blessings of Rahmat ul-lil Alameen for all humanity. He (S.A.W) was kind and affectionate for the whole humanity in general and his (S.A.W) Ummah in particular. Allah Almighty introduces Rasoolullah (S.A.W) in the words of Holy Quran as: ﷲٍ ﷳٍ ﷳٍ (Al-Quran 9:128). For the Believers he (S.A.W) is very kind.

It is a fact that Rasoolullah (S.A.W) has countless love and kindess for his Ummah, so he has taught them the method of Istikhara so that they may get the benefit by it with regard to their welfare and prosperity. Moreover, it would be easy for them to have connection with Allah Almighty in their routine matters. As Rasouullah (S.A.W) has provided us guidance and light in all aspects of life comprehensively, so he (S.A.W) also narrated us the exact method of Istikhara which has been described by Hazrat Jabir (R.A) plainly: ﷲٍ ﷳٍ ﷳٍ.
Hazrat Jabir Ansari (R.A) narrates that Rasoolullah (S.A.W) used to teach Istikhara in all matters in such a way as he (S.A.W) used to teach us the Holy Quran. Rasoolullah (S.A.W) used to say that when anyone amongst you wants to do something, he should offer two rakaat Salaete-e-Nafal and pray like this: “O’Allah I beseech good from you utter knowledge, I ask for an ability to do something from your Divine Power. I request for mercy from your great mercifulness. It is because you have the ultimate Divine Power (in every matters) (whereas) I don’t have the power (to do something myself), you are all knowing and I don’t know (anything) and you are Omniscent. O, Allah if this thing (any sort of work), according to your knowledge, is better for me with regard to my religion, this life and life after death, then bestow it to me. Make it easy for me and make it blessing for me: And according to your knowledge, if this thing (any sort of work), is bad for me with regard to my religion, this life and life after death, then turn it away from me and turn me away from it. And wherever (in any sort of work and any time) it is better for me then bestow it to me and make me satisfied with it. (narrator says that) and then one should speak out one’s personal needs.

Two stages of the method of Istikhara according to sunnah has been derived in this Hadith:

- Salat-e-Istikhara
- Dua-e-Istikhara

**Salat-e-Istikhara**

Whenever anyone wants to do anything i.e travelling, exodus, wedlock or job etc then he must beseech good from Allah Almighty in the form of Istikhara. The first stage is Salat-e-Istikhara and its method is like this:

**Intention (Niyyatt) in Salat-e-Istikhara**

All though intention can be expressed in any language yet Arabic is the best of all as it is:

“ئستعبت ان اصل رکعتي صلوا الاستخاره
“I intend to offer two rakaat salat-e-Istikhara.
Number of Rakaat in Salat-e-Istikhara

It is narrated by Hazrat Jabir (R.A) that:  
اذا هم احد كم بالا مر، فلير كع ركعتين من غير الفريضة (Bukhari, M (1994)). Whenever amongst you intends to do something, then he should offer two rakaat besides obligatory prayer (Farz)”. It is proved from this hadith that there are two Rakaat in Salat-e-Istikhara. But it is stated in the Hadith narrated by Hazrat Abu Ayub Ansari (R.A): (Baehqi, A, (1424 AH))  

صل مكتب الله لک. Say prayer whatever have been written in your fate, it means that say prayer with the help get from Divine Power.

It is found that a person can offer more than two rakaat salat-e-Istikhara. Ibne Hajar, A, compares both of the Hadiths and narrates:

ويمكن الجمع بين المراد أنه لا يقتصر  
على ركعتين واحدة للتنصيص على الركعتين ويكون ذكرهما على سبيل التنصيص بالانداني على الاعلي، فلوصلو أكثر من ركعتين اجزا والظاهر ان يشترط اذا اراد ان يسلم من كل ركعتين ليحصل مسمى ركعتين.

It is possible to add both of them it means that one must not shorten it to a single rakaat because there has been specification of two rakaat now (thus single rakaat is forbidden). The statement of two rakaat is a warning from inferior to superior. If someone offered more than two rakaat, then it is also lawful. But is clear that it is a condition that when he/she wants to offer more than two rakaat, then he/she should finish salaat after two rakaat, so that he/she may get it.

Shaukani, M (1973) explains this comparisons and says:

یجزی ان صلی ارباعاً أكثر بتسليم لقول : "فلير كع ركعتين" ليس بحجة على قول الجمهور  
“It is lawful to offer four rakaats with a single salaam owing to the hadith narrated by Hazrat Abu Ayub (R.A). “Say prayer with the help you get from Divine Power” it argues that it is not unlawful to offer more than two rakaats and the number of rakaats is explained in another Hadith “Thus he/she should offer two rakaats”. It is not an objection according to Jamhoor.

Alamgir, A says:-----------

"There are two rakaats in Salaat-e-Istikhara"

However, all the four schools of thought in Ahle-Sunnat wal-Jamaat are agreed that there are two rakaat in salaat-e-Istikhara, which is mustahhab.

But the accepted number of rakaat according to Ahnaf is that there are four rakaat at day time (Kasani, A (1987)). Because Hazrat Abdullah bin Umer (R.A) has offered four rakaat Nawafal at day time owing to Hadith narrated by Hazrat Abu Ayub (R.A) that Rasoolullah (S.A.W) said:  

اربع قبل الظهر ليس فيهن تسليم، تفتتح لهن اوباء السماء (Abu Daud, S (1414 AH)).
There are four rakaat before Zuhr in which ther is no salaam, the doors of Heaven are open for them. It also said that two rakaat nafal is accepted at day and night owing to the Hadith narrated by Hazrat ibne Umer (R.A) that Rasoolullah (S.A.W) says:

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\text{صلاة الليل والنهار منى مثلي (Termazy, M (1415 AH))}
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“There are two rakaat salat at day and night”. However it is better to offer four rakaat at night, because according to the Hadith narrated by Hazrat Aysha (R.A) that he (R.A) was asked about Qiyam-ul-Lail of Rasoolullah (S.A.W) in the Holy Month of Ramzan then she (R.A) said:

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\text{يصلى اربعاً فلأ تسال عن حسنن وطلونين ثم يصلى ثلاثاً. (Al-Bukhari, M (1994))}
\]

He (S.A.W) never exceeded from eleven rakaats in Ramzan as well as in other months. He (S.A.W) used to offer four rakaats. Do not ask about the magnificence and prolixity of him (S.A.W), then he (S.A.W) used to offer four rakaats. Do not ask about his (S.A.W) magnificence and prolixity, he (S.A.W) used to offer three rakaat after that. The word “کبى” refers to habit and regularity, in this Hadith, if Rasoolullah (S.A.W) shows regularity and consistency on anything that is considerd supreme by Allah Almighty. So it is found that it is better to offer four rakaat at night. But it is said with regard to the accepted number of rakaat in salat-e-Istikhara that all the four schools of thought are agreed that it is better to offer two rakaat in salaat-e-Istikhara.

**Qiraat in Salaat-e-Istikhara**

It is essential to recite surah Fateha in both the rakaats but beside this, a small surah should be recited along with it. Nowavi, Y, says:

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\text{الفضل ان يقرأ بعد الفتحه في الأولى "قل يا ايهاالكافرون" وفي الثانية "قل هوالله احد"}
\]

It is better to recite "قل هوالله احد" after surah Fateh in the first rakaat and "قل يا ايهاالكافرون" in the second rakaat.

Ibne Hajar, A, describes the specifications of these both surahs as:

ولهما مناسبة بالحال لما فيهما من الاخلاص والتوحيد والمستخير يحتاجذالمثل:

“Both surahs have been connected because the emphasis has been laid on the oneness and attachment with Allah Almighty and the person who wants Istikhara is in need of its expression.

It is also relevant to recite these verses (Ayaat):

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\text{وربك يخلق ما يشاء ويختار ما كان لهم الخبرة. سبحانه وتعالى عما يشتركون. وربك يعلم ما تكن صدورهم وما يعلون. (69-68: Al Quran: 28)}
\]

And the verse:

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\text{وما كان لمومن ولابومنة إذا قضى الله ورسوله أمارأ ان يكون لهم الخبرة من امره ومن يعص الله ورسول فقد ضل ضلالاً مبيناً. (36: Al Quran: 33)}
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Ibne Hajar, A, Ibne-e-Abideen, M and Tahtavi, A (1356 AH) have described the complete and perfect form of qiraat that one should recite "قل يا ايها الكافرون“ after surah
Fateha, in the first rakaat and should also add the above mentioned verse of surah Qasas. Whereas he/she should recite surah Ikhlas and the above mentioned ayat (verse) of Surah Ahzab after surah Fateha.

Overall there are three opinions about qiraat in salaat-e-Istikhara.

1. Tahtavi, A (1356AH) Says:

يستحت اى يمشاء فی الشکعۃ الاولی ثعذ الفبتحۃ "لل یب ایھب الکبفشوى" وفی الثبًیۃ "لل ھو اللہ احذ"۔

2. It is also better to recite below mentioned verses after surah Fateha in Salaat-e-Istikhara:

The verse may be recited in first rakkat. (Al Quran: 28: 68-69)

The verse my be recited in second rakaat, after surah fateha. (Al Quran: 33: 36)

3. Ibne Qudama, A (1981) says that there is no specification of surah in salaat-e-Istikhara but any of the surah can be recited in it. Ibne Rushd, M, says:

لا توقيف فی ها تین الرکعتین فی القراءة يستحب وان، يجوز ان يقرأهما المرء حمزہ من الليل.

“Mustahab (desirable) qiraaat is not bound in specific surahs in these two rakaat. And it is lawful to recite the surah in these rakaats, according to his habit at night, whatever he/she recites in salaat.

Ayenee, M says about the non-specification of surahs:

لم اجد في شئی من طریق احادیث الاستخبار التعیین مايقرأه فيماها .

“I have not found any specification of surah in the salaat-e-Istikhara. Thus, it is better to recite these surah which are learnt by heart so that he/she may recite it with ease and humility.

Timings for salaat-e-Istikhara

Aduwee, A, says that it is lawful to offer salaat-e-Istikhara at any time except the time which is unlawful.

Tahtavi, A(1356AH) says that Shafia has allowed to offer salaat-e-Istikhara at Harm-e-Makkah, during the unlawful timings. They have presumed it with two rakaat-e-Tawaf, They give prooff of Hadith narrated by Hazrat Jubair bin Mutaam that Rasoolullah (S.A.W) said: (Nesai, A)

يا بني عبد مناف لا تمنعوا أحد اطاف بهذا البيت وصلى في أي ساعته من ليل انهاهار

Ibne Qudama, A(1981) says that according to Hanfia and Hanabala, it is unlawful to offer nawafal every time.

They forbid to offer nawafal at unlawful timings generally owing to the Ahaadith (sayings of the Holy Prophet S.A.W) in which it is prohibited. One of these Hadith is narrated by Ibn-e-Abbas (R.A), he says:

شه هن عدین رجیل مرضی اهم عندي عمر رضی اللہ عن الصلاة بعد الصبح حتى شروق الشمس وبعد العصر حتى تغرب.(194)

(Bukhari, M)

“Many of the favorite personalities means noble persons have borne witness and the most liked by them is Hazrat Umar (r.a) for me who has narrated the Hadith that Rasoolullah (S.A.W) forbade us to offer salaat after salaat-e-Fajar till the sun rises high and after salaate-e-Asar till the sun sets down.”

Hazrat Amar-Bin-Absa (r.a) narrates: قلت يا نبي الله: اخبرني عن الصلاة قال صل صلاة الصبح ثم أقصر عن الصلاة حين تطلع الشمس حتى ترتفع فإنها تطلع حين تطلع بين قرني الشيطان وحينئذ يسجد لها الكفار ثم صل فإن الصلاة مشهودة محضورة حتى يستقل الظل بالرحмя ثم أقصر عن الصلاة فإنها حينئذ تسجف جهنم فإذا أفقل الفئ فصل فإن الصلاة مشهودة محضورة حتى تصلى العصر ثم أقصر عن الصلاة حتى تغب شمس فإنها تغرب بين قرني الشيطان وحينئذ يسجد لها الكفار. (Muslim, M (1415 AH))

“I asked about salaat from Rasoolullah (s.a.w), Rasoolullah (s.a.w) said that say salaat-e-fajar and stay till the sun rises high because it rises over the two horns of sataan (Devil) and at that time the non-believers (kaifir) prostrate before it. Then offer salaat because the angles will bear witness for that salaat and they will be over there till the time. When the shadow of the sun gets salid like a spear means when the sun rises high and then stop praying because at that time the Hell gets blazed it means the time of Zawaal (decline of the sun), when the shadow appears, offer salaat because the angels will bear witness for that salaat and they will be called in. Hence you should offer salaat-e-Asar then stop praying till the sunset because it sets down over the two horns of sataan (Devil) and at that time the non-believers (Kafir) prostrate before it.

There is no specification of time about salaat-e-Istikhara, in Hadith. Therefore, one group of religious scholars has considered it lawful for all times. But the majority of the religious scholars did not consider salaat-e-Istikhara during unlawful timings (Auqat-e-Makrooha). This contradiction has been clarified by Ibne Abdul Bar, Y (1393 AH). Thus Nawafal-e-Istikhara are lawful the whole night and it is lawful the whole day except the forbidden timings and the Nawafal at night are superior than nawafal at daytime. Hazrat Abu Huraira (R.A) narrated that Rasollulah (S.A.W) said: أفضل الصلاة بعد الفرضية الصلاة في جوف الليل (Darmi, A)

“Afzal (the best) salaat after the obligatory prayers (Farz) is the salaat of midnight. According to Hazrat Abu Umama (R.A) Rasollulah (S.A.W) was asked: (Termezi, M (1415 AH))

“Which of the prayer is most accepted one. Rasoolullah (S.A.W) said that the prayer which is sought at the last portion of night and after the obligatory prayers.
However, when salaat-e-Istikhara will be offered, keeping in mind all its issues then this salaat will certainly be accepted by Allah Almighty. Therefore, it is essential to be aware of all the theorems (issues) of salaat.

**DUA’A-E-ISTIKHARA**

If the person who is offering Istikhara, gets free from saying salaat-e-Istikhara, then after it comes the stage of Dua’a-e-Istikhara (the prayer for Isitikhara), then it is must for him/her to seek dua with all its etiquettes. One should begin prayer with the glory and praise (Hamd-o-Sana) of Allah Almighty and recite darood over Rasoolullah (S.A.W) and end it with the same way then his/her prayer is closer to acceptance. And after that recite the following dua-e-Istikhara.

One thing should be kept in mind that when the person who is offering Istikhara reaches the words “هذا الأمر” during the recitation of the dua’a then he/she should mention the work for which the Istikhara is offered either verbally or by heart, it does not matter. Although it is enough to recite dua-e-Istikhara once yet it is better to recite it thrice. Because it is sunnah to recite it thrice.

**Dua’a-e-Istikhara for marriage**

The above mentioned method for Istikhara is used for common purposes and it can also be done for routine matters. However, Rasoolullah (S.A.W) has described the method of specific Istikhara for the purpose of betrothal and marriage and that the proposal for marriage may be kept hidden then he/she should make fresh ablution with all the etiquettes and Masnoon prayers (dua’a). Then one should offer salaat-e-Nafal as much as one can offer easily with the intention of Istikhara. After Nawafal praise and glorification (Hamd-o-Sana) of Allah Almighty may be related and Darood-e-Pak over Rasoolullah (S.A.W) may be recited and after that the below mentioned dua may be recited thrice:

(O, Allah you have the Divine Power and I have none and you are omniscient and I know nothing and you know the invisible as well. And according to your knowledge such lady (take here, her name) is better for me with regard to my religion, this life and life after death then bestow it to me. And if besides this (another lady) is better for me with regard to my religion, this life and life after death, then bestow it to me.)

(Bukhari, M (1994))

(there, your knowledge such lady (take here, her name) is better for me with regard to my religion, this life and life after death then bestow it to me. And if besides this (another lady) is better for me with regard to my religion, this life and life after death, then bestow it to me.)

(Hakim, M (1405 AH)).
One thing is essential to know that the personal pronouns used in this dua’a is meant for females it means that if a man offers Istikhara for a women then he should recite it like this but if a woman offers Istikhara for a man then in that case, wherever (personal pronoun feminine) “ھَا” is used, he should recite it as “ھُ” (personal pronoun masculine) i.e “فَاقِدَرْھ” etc.

CONCLUSION
Allah Almighty has sent the Holy Prophet (S.A.W) as mercy for the entire world. He was considerate for the humanity in general and for his own Ummah in particular. Allah Almighty himself has introduced the Holy Prophet (S.A.W) as affection incarnate for the faithfuls. It is due to his kind and considerate nature that the Holy Prophet (S.A.W) has taught Istikhara to Muslims, so that they may meet their success in their tasks and may get benefit from this pious action. We should follow the sunnah of the Prophet (S.A.W) because Allah Almighty likes it and acceptance of Allah Almighty lies in following the way of His last Prophet Hazrat Muhammad (S.A.W).

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