

Al-'Umrah

The Meaning of 'Umrah

The word *'umrah* in common speech "visit", but in the Shari'ah it means paying a visit to the *Bayt Allah al-Haram* (the Sacred House of God, i.e. the Holy Ka'bah) in a specific form.

The Kinds of 'Umrah

The 'Umrah is of two kinds: the first which is performed independently of the Hajj (called *al-'Umrat al-mufradah al-mustaqillah 'an al-Hajj*), and the second kind which is performed in conjunction with the Hajj (*al-'Umrat al-mundammah ila al-Hajj*). The *al-'Umrat al-mufradah*, the independent 'Umrah, all the five legal schools agree, can be performed at all times of the year, though it is meritorious to perform it during the month of Rajab according to the Imamiyyah, and in Ramadan according to the four Sunni schools.

The time of the conjugate 'Umrah, which is performed before the Hajj and in the course of the same journey by the Hujjaj coming to the Holy Makkah from distant countries, by consensus of all five schools, extends from Shawwal to Dhul Hijjah. However, there is disagreement among legists about the month of Dhul Hijjah, whether the entire month or only the first ten days belong to the Hajj season. Anyone who performs the conjugate 'Umrah is considered relieved of the obligation to perform the *al-'Umrat al-mufradah* by those who believe in its being obligatory.

Difference Between the Two Kinds of 'Umrah

The Imamiyyah scholars make a distinction between *al-'Umrat al-mufradah* and *'Umrat al-tamattu'*, citing the following reasons:

1. The *Tawaf al-nisa'* (to be explained later) is obligatory in *al-'Umrat al-mufradah*, not in the *'Umrat al-tamattu'*; and according to some jurists is forbidden.

2. The time of *'Umrat al-tamattu'* extends from the first of the month of Shawwal to the ninth of Dhu al-Hijjah, whereas *al-'Umrat al-mufradah* can be performed at all times of the year.
3. The pilgrim (*mu'tamir*) performing the *'Umrat al-tamattu'* is required to shorten his hair (*al-taqsir*), whereas the *mu'tamir* of *al-'Umrat al-mufradah* can choose between shortening his hair or completely shaving his head (*al-halq*), as shall be explained later.
4. The *'Umrat al-tamattu'* and the Hajj occur in the same year, which is not the case with *al-'Umrat al-mufradah*.

Karrarah, in his book *al-Din wa al-Hajj 'ala al-madhahib al-'arba'ah*, says that, according to the Maliki and Shafi'i schools, for the *mu'tamir* of *al-'Umrat al-mufradah* all things are permissible, even sexual intercourse, after the shortening of hair (*al-taqsir*) or the head shave (*al-halq*), irrespective of whether he brings along with him the sacrificial offering (*al-hady*) or not. But according to the Hanbali and Hanafi schools, the *mu'tamir* gets away with *al-taqsir* or *al-halq*, if he does not bring the sacrificial offering; otherwise he remains in the state of *ihram* until he gets through the Hajj and the 'Umrah on the day of sacrifice (*yawm al-nahr*).

The Conditions of the 'Umrah

The conditions for the 'Umrah are essentially the same as mentioned in the case of the Hajj.

The Status of 'Umrah

According to the Hanafi and Maliki schools, the 'Umrah is not obligatory but a highly recommended *sunnah* (*sunnah mu'akkadah*). But according to the Shafi'i and Hanbali schools and the majority of Imamiyyah legists, it is obligatory (*wajib*) for one who is *mustati'*, and desirable (*mustahabb*) for one who is not *mustati'*: In support, they cite the Qur'anic verse:

وَأَتِمُّوا الْحَجَّ وَالْعُمْرَةَ لِلَّهِ

(Perform the Hajj and the 'Umrah for Allah.)¹

(*Fiqh al-Sunnah*, vol. V; *al-Fiqh 'ala al-madhahib al-'arba'ah*; *al-Jawahir*; *al-Mughni*)²

The Acts of the 'Umrah

According to *al-Fiqh 'ala al-madhahib al-'arba'ah*, whatever is *wajib* or *sunnah* for the Hajj is also *wajib* and *sunnah* for the 'Umrah. But the 'Umrah does differ from the Hajj in certain respects: there is no specific time for performing the 'Umrah; it does not involve the halt (*wuquf*) in the plain of 'Arafat; neither

the departure thenceforth to al-Muzdalifah; nor the *ramy al-jamarat*.³

The Imamiyyah book *al-Jawahir* mentions that: "The obligatory acts (*af'al* or *a'mal*) of the Hajj are twelve: *ihram*; the *wuquf* at 'Arafat; the *wuquf* at al-Mash'ar al-Haram; the entry into Mina; the *ramy*; the *dhibh* (sacrifice); its related *taqsir* or *halq*; the *tawaf* (the sevenfold circumambulation of the Ka'bah), and its related *raka'at* (units of the length of prayers); the *sa'y*; the *tawaf al-nisa'*, and its related *raka'at*. The obligatory acts of *al-'Umrat al-mufradah* are eight: *niyyah* (intention); *ihram*⁴; *tawaf* and its related *raka'at*; the *sa'y*; the *taqsi*; the *tawaf al-nisa'*; and its related *raka'at*."

This indicates that all the legal schools agree that the acts of the Hajj exceed those of the 'Umrah by the acts associated with the *wuquf*. Moreover, the Imamiyyah school considers it obligatory for the performer of the *al-'Umrat al-mufradah* to perform a second *tawaf*, the *tawaf al-nisa'*. Similarly the Maliki school differs from others in considering *halq* or *taqsir* as non-obligatory for *al-'Umrat al-mufradah*.

Two Subsidiary Issues

1. The obligation (*wujub*) of *al-'Umrat al-mufradah* is not connected with the *istita'ah* for the Hajj. If, supposedly, it is possible for a person to go to Mecca at a time other than that of the Hajj and not possible at the time of the Hajj, then the 'Umrah instead of the Hajj becomes obligatory for him. If he dies without performing it, its expense is taken out from his heritage."⁵

Similarly, if one has *istita'ah* for *Hajj al-'ifrad* instead of the 'Umrah, it becomes obligatory upon him; because each of them is independent of the other. This applies to *al-'Umrat al-mufradah*. As to *'Umrat al-tamattu'*, which shall be explained later, its *wujub* depends upon that of the Hajj, since it is a part of it.

2. According to the Imamiyyah, it is not permissible for one intending to enter the Holy Mecca to cross the *miqat* or enter its *haram* (sacred precincts) without getting into the state of *ihram*, even if he has performed the Hajj and the 'Umrah many times before. Only when the exit and entry recur several times during month, or when after entering the city as a *muhrim* he goes out and re-enters for a second time in less than thirty days, it is not obligatory. Therefore, *ihram* with respect to entry into Mecca is comparable to the *wudu'* before touching the Holy Qur'an. This clearly demonstrates the baselessness of the lie that the Shi'ah do not consider al-Bayt al-Haram as sacred, and that they pretend to perform the Hajj for the sake of polluting the holy sanctuaries. (!)

According to Abu Hanifah, it is not permissible to go beyond the *miqat* and enter the *haram* without *ihram*, but entry into the remaining area is permissible without *ihram*. Malik does not agree with this, and two opinions are ascribed to al-Shafi'i on the matter.

This much of discussion about the 'Umrah is sufficient for throwing light upon it, so that the reader may grasp its difference with the Hajj, though only in some aspects. What we shall say later will offer further clarification.

1. The Qur'an, 2: 196.
2. According to al-Mughni, Ahmad ibn Hanbal did not consider the 'Umrah as being obligatory for Meccans, for the reason that the most important act of the 'Umrah is tawaf (circumambulation of the Ka'bah) which they do and it suffices them.
3. In the book al-Fiqh 'ala al-madhahib al-'arba'ah, it is the author's want to give the text followed by a commentary and notes. In the text, he states the points of consensus of all the four Sunni schools, the different position of each is given in the commentary. What we have quoted here is taken from the text, not from the commentary.
4. According to al-Din wa al-Hajj 'ala al-madhahib al-'arba'ah, by Karrarah, one of the things which distinguishes the 'Umrah from the Hajj is that its ihram is not assumed from any of the mawaqit specified for the Hajj. From the Imamiyyah viewpoint, there is no difference between the miqat for one performing 'Umrah and the miqat for one on Hajj with regard to ihram.
5. The Imamiyyah author of al-Madarik says: "The better known and sounder of opinions is that the obligation of 'Umrah is independent of the obligation of Hajj." The author of al-Jawahir states, "The statements of fuqaha' are not free of confusion... the one which appears sounder is that those who live far away from Mecca are relieved of the obligation of 'Umrah mufradah, and that which is obligatory upon them is 'Umrat al-tamattu; whose wujub is related to that of Hajj.

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