

Where should the hands be placed after rukoo?

Shaykh al-Uthaymeen was asked:

What is the position of the hands after getting up from the rukoo'? I have seen people raise their hands and then place them on their chests and other people who raise them and keep them to their sides.

So he replied:

It seems that the Sunnah is to place the right hand on the left forearm, because of the general meaning of the Hadeeth of Sahl ibn Sa'd which was narrated by al-Bukhaaree:

"The people were commanded that a man should put his right hand on his left forearm when praying."

If you look at the general meaning of this Hadeeth you will note that it says, "When praying" not "when standing." Thus it will be clear that when standing after rukoo' it is prescribed to put (the right hand on the left forearm); because when bowing (rukoo') the hands are placed on the knees, and when prostrating they are placed on the ground, and when sitting they are placed on the thighs. But when standing – which includes standing both before and after rukoo' – a person should place his right hand on his left forearm.

This is the correct view.

(Taken from Ash-Sharh al-Mumti', 3/146)

And,

Shaykh al-Albaanee states:

He used to instruct them to be at ease in it; hence, he said to "the one who prayed badly", ...Next, raise your head until you are standing straight and every bone has taken its proper place - in another narration, When you rise, make your spine upright and raise your head, until the bones return to their joints. [1]

Footnote:

[1] Bukhaari & Muslim (first sentence only), Daarimi, Haakim, Shaafi`i & Ahmad. By 'bones' here is meant those of the spinal structure, the vertebrae, as has preceded in the main text.

NB: The meaning of this hadeeth is clear and obvious: to be at ease in this standing. As for the usage of this hadeeth by our brothers from the Hijaaz and elsewhere as evidence to justify placing the right hand on the left in this standing, it is far-removed from the meaning of the multitude of narrations of this hadeeth. In fact it is a false argument, since the placing mentioned is not referred to with regard to the first standing in any of the narrations or wordings of the hadeeth; therefore, how can "the bones taking their proper places" mentioned in the hadeeth be interpreted as referring to the right hand taking hold of the left before rukoo`? This would apply if all the versions of the hadeeth could be construed to mean this, so what about when they imply an obviously different meaning? In fact, this placing of theirs cannot be inferred from the hadeeth at all, since what is meant by "bones" is the bones of the spine, as confirmed by the Sunnah, "... he would stand straight until every vertebra returned to its place."

I, for one, am in no doubt that to place the hands on the chest in this standing is an innovation and a leading astray, for it is not mentioned in any of the ahaadeeth about prayer, despite their large number. Had this practice any foundation, it would have reached us by at least one narration. Further, not one of the Salaf practised it, nor has a single leading scholar of hadeeth mentioned it, as far as I know.

This is not inconsistent with what Shaikh Tuwajiri has quoted in his article (pp. 18-19) from Imaam Ahmad (rahimahullaah), "if one wishes, he may leave his hands by his sides, or, if he wishes, he can place them on his chest", for Imaam Ahmad did not attribute this to the Prophet (sallallahu `alaihi wa sallam), but said it from his own ijtihaad and opinion, and opinion can be erroneous. When authentic evidence establishes the innovatory nature of any practice, such as this one, then the saying of an Imaam in its favour does not negate its being an innovation, as Shaykh-ul-Islaam Ibn Taymiyyah (rahimahullaah) has written. In fact, I see in these words of his, an indication that Imaam Ahmad did not regard the above-mentioned placing as being proved in the Sunnah, for he allowed a choice between practising it and leaving it! - Does the respected Shaykh think that the Imaam also allowed a similar choice regarding placing the hands before rukoo`? Thus, it is proved that the placing of the hands on the chest in the standing after rukoo` is not part of the Sunnah. This is a brief discussion of this issue, which could be dealt with in more detail and depth, but due to lack of space here, that is done instead in my Refutation against Shaikh Tuwajiri.

(Taken from The Prophet's Prayer Described)