**Cleanliness and Filth**



They also ask you about (the injunctions concerning) menstruation. Say: "It is a state of hurt (and ritual impurity), so keep away from them during their menstruation and do not approach them until they are cleansed.**149** When they are cleansed, then (you can) go to them inasmuch as God has commanded you (according to the urge He has placed in your nature, and within the terms He has enjoined upon you). Surely God loves those who turn to Him in sincere repentance (of past sins and errors), and He loves those who cleanse themselves.(1)



And keep your clothing clean!(2)

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Al-HarithibnAsim al-Ash’ari, may Allah be pleased with him, reported that the Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, said, “Purity is half of belief. ‘Praise be to Allah’ fills up the balance, and ‘Glory be to Allah and praise be to Allah’ fills up everything between the heavens and the earth. The Prayer is a light. *Sadaqa* is a proof. Steadfastness is an illumination. The Qur’an is a proof for you or against you. Everybody goes out and trades with his own self, either seting it free or destroying it.”(3)

Aisha, may Allah be pleased with her, said, “The Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, said, ‘Ten things make up man’s natural form: trimming the moustache, letting the beard grow, using the *siwak*, snuffing water up the nose, cutting the nails, washing the knuckles, removing hair from the armpits, shaving the pubic hair and using water in the lavatory.’” The narrator said, “I forgot the tenth. It could be rinsing the mouth.”(4)

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Islam Is the Religion of Purity

Our religion orders us to be in a state of purity when we worship. In Islam, a religion which gives great importance to cleanliness, purity is like the spiritual essence of worship. In the Qur’ân God revealed: *“God loves those who strive to purify themselves”* (Tawbah 9:108). And with his words “God is pure, and He only accepts those who are pure,” the Prophet emphasized the importance of purity in Islam.

To obtain the pleasure and love of God, a Muslim must be physically clean, and the soul purified of evil thoughts and spiritual impurities. This is why Muslims must give importance to cleanliness in every aspect of their lives. Purification is a condition of the acceptance of any form of worship. For example we must perform ablutions, the ritual of purification before the prayer. Prayer (*salâh*) is not accepted without purification. In addition to physical purification, the area where we pray must also be clean to ensure the acceptance of the prayer. Then there is spiritual purity which is even more important than the physical purification. Spiritual purity is only feasible if we purify our thoughts and emotions of evil and transform our spirituality accordingly to please the Creator.

What is tahârah? What are the different kinds of tahârah?

The meaning of the word *tahârah* is purification. According to the Islamic faith, *tahârah* is purifying oneself of major impurities namely the physical and spiritual impurities which prevent the acceptance of worship. There are two types of purification, or *tahârah*:

1. Purification from the *najâsah* (material impurities)

2. Purification from the *hadath* (ritual impurities)

What is the purification of najâsah?

*Najâsah* is the state of material impurity, and *najis* is the name given to the substance of impurity which deems us physically unclean. Purification of these impurities entails the cleansing of the body or clothing from anything which is regarded as impure in Islam.

What is the purification of hadath?

*Hadath* is the state of impurity which religiously prevents us from performing worship: lack of ablution and the conditions in which *ghusl* (bathing) is required; for example, wet dream, the completion of a woman’s monthly cycle, and the bleeding due to childbirth. By performing the ritual of purification of ablution or bathing, we are cleansed of this impurity. The reasons and situations that require ablution or bathing will be explained in greater depth in the section of the book dedicated to the purification from the *hadath*, or ritual impurities.

Purification of Material Impurities

*Najâsah*, or material impurities, are divided in two groups: those that impede the performance of the daily prayers and those that do not impede performing the prayers. The first: fecal excrement, urine, blood, semen, and discharge of humans and animals whose meat is prohibited, and the excretion of poultry namely chickens, goose, and ducks whose meat is permitted to eat in Islam. These forms of impurities are known as *najâsat al-ghalî zah*, or heavy impurity. We must ensure that neither our bodies nor our clothing come into contact with these impurities. Among these impurities: an amount of solid impurity weighing 2,80 grams (0,10 of an ounce) or less or liquid impurity no larger than the palm of the human hand does not invalidate the prayer. If any amount exceeding that stated comes in contact with the body or clothing, the impurity must be removed and cleaned before praying. Impure blood is the blood which flows from the bodies of humans and animals. However, any blood which remains in the meat and veins, the blood remaining inside and outside the liver and hearts of animals sacrificed according to the Islamic regulations, and the blood of flees, lice, grasshoppers and flies all do not invalidate the prayer.

The second form of impurity is the excretion and urine of animals prescribed *halâl*, namely horses, goats, cattle, buffalo, and camels, and the excretion of birds whose meat is forbidden to eat in Islam. These forms of impurity are called *najâsat alkhafîfah*, or light impurity. The prayer is valid if one forth or less of the body or clothing comes into contact with this form of impurity, but invalid if the amount exceeds that stated.

Although our religion permits us to pray if we have come in contact with a specific amount of the defined impurities, this is to relieve any difficulty of performing our duties of worship and is only in the case of necessity. In accordance with our faith, it is more desirable to go before the Creator in a state of total purity.

The Means of Purification

Anything that has come in contact with an impurity should be purified by washing or wiping with clean water. Washing the area polluted with the impure substance three times is sufficient to cleanse the body or clothing. If a garment has come in contact with an impurity, washing the garment at least three times and wringing it each time so that the least possible amount of water remains is sufficient. If the polluted area is on a larger or thicker item that cannot be wrung, for example a carpet, washing the item three times with an interval each time it is washed until the water ceases to drip is sufficient to cleanse it of the impurity. Solid items which do not absorb the impurity, for example glass, marble and porcelain, can be cleaned by wiping, scraping, or scrubbing with a clean cloth and water.

Purification of the Body according to the Sunnah

In one of the hadith, the Prophet said: “It is a duty that every Muslim owes to God to take a bath (at least) every seven days,” expressing the importance of cleansing the body. In addition to washing and purifying the whole body of dirt and sweat, there are also specific areas of the body that we should wash more frequently. The hair, the armpits and genital areas should be washed often, and the hair that grows under the arms and around the groin area should be removed on a regular basis.

Every Muslim must cut both the finger and toe nails frequently and make a habit of brushing the teeth and keeping the nose clean. It is more desirable to cut the hair or nails when the body is in a state of purity. (5)

**Resources:**

**(1) 2:222 /The Quran with Annotated Interpretation in Modern English by Ali Unal**

**(2) 74:4 /The Quran with Annotated Interpretation in Modern English by Ali Unal**

**(3) Sahih Muslim, Taharah, 1**

**(4)Sahih Muslim, Taharah, 56**

**(5) The Young Person’s Guide to Living Islam, Asli Kaplan, Tughrabooks**