

Taharat & Najasat: Ritual purity & impurity

Introduction

A Muslim tries to maintain the ritual purity of his body, clothes and everyday commodities by avoiding contact with impure things because such contacts would render the other items impure and would, therefore necessitate the process of purification.

Residing in a non-Muslim country makes the process of maintaining purity difficult for some Muslims as they deal with its non-Muslim citizens in various situations of their day-to-day life: in restaurants, cafes, barber's shops, laundrettes, and, in public baths and utilities, etc. Therefore, it is appropriate for me to clarify for the respected readers the religious rules concerning taharat (ritual purity) and najasat (ritual impurity).

General Rules

36. A well known religious law says: "Everything is ritually pure for you unless you come to know that it is ritually impure." This law declares everything to be pure unless one becomes sure a particular item has become impure. And as long as you are not sure that it has become ritually impure (najis), it is to be considered pure and you can apply all the rules of purity to it without any hesitation or doubt.

37. The Ahlul Kitab (that is, the Jews, the Christians and the Zoroastrians) are ritually pure (tahir) as long as you do not know that they have become ritually impure (najis) by coming into contact with an impure object. You can follow this ruling when dealing with them.

38. The impurity transfers from one item to another through flowing wetness [that is, there is so much wetness in the impure item that it permeates to another item and makes it impure]. The impurity is neither transferred when it is dry, nor is transferred by non-flowing wetness. So, if you place your hand on a dry najis item, your hand will not become impure.

39. You can assume the ritual purity (taharat) of any person that you meet and shake hands with (even if

that person's hand is wet) as long as you do not know his faith and religion – in such cases you can assume that he might be a Muslim or one of the Ahlul Kitab. Moreover, it is not obligatory for you to ask him in order to ascertain his religion; that is, even if doing so does not put you or him in any inconvenience. (See the question–answer section below).

40. Any water drops or other liquids that fall upon your body or dress are to be considered pure as long as you do not know that they are najis.

41. All kinds of alcohol (whether extracted from wood or other sources) is pure, not najis. So, the medicines, the perfumes, and the food containing alcohol are pure and can be used. It is also permissible to eat such food if the amount of alcohol is very minute.

42. No matter who was the previous user, the everyday commodities and utensils can be used without the need for purifying them as long as you do not know that they had become najis previously. (See the question–answer section below.)

43. If the carpet and the mattress become najis by the elements that do not have a mass (i.e., do not leave any marks or stains on the carpet or the mattress), it can be purified by sprinkling water over it from a kettle or a jug once until the pure water covers the impure area, and then wipe the water away by using a piece of cloth or a vacuum cleaner, etc. The carpet or the mattress will now be considered pure; and the water removed from it will be considered, on the basis of obligatory precaution, as najis.

The same rule will apply in purifying the cloth if it becomes najis by impure sources other than urine. Things becoming najis by urine will be discussed later on.

44. If one wants to purify the carpet or the mattress by using pure water connected to the kurr source [e.g., by using a hose pipe instead of pouring water from a jug], there is no need to wipe the water off using a piece of cloth or a vacuum cleaner, etc. As soon as the kurr water covers the najis area, it will become pure [and the water will also be considered as pure].

45. It is possible to purify the carpet or the mattress which has become najis by the elements that do have a mass (i.e., do leave marks or stains like blood or semen) by the same method as mentioned in No. 39 provided that the impure element is removed while washing or prior to washing. The only difference is that if it is purified by the qalil water [e.g., from a jug or a glass], then the water removed from the carpet will be considered najis as a confirmed opinion and not as an obligatory precaution.

46. If a carpet or a mattress becomes najis by urine of an infant child that mostly gets nutrition by breast–feeding, then it can be purified by sprinkling water – even if it is little – on it until it covers the najis area. In this case, there is no need to remove the water by using a piece of cloth or vacuum cleaner, etc.

47. If clothes become najis by urine, they can be purified by sprinkling little water on them from a kettle or a jug, etc., until it covers the najis area; then the water should be wiped off by using a piece of cloth,

etc. You have to do this twice so that the clothes restore their taharah.

48. The water that has been wiped off from the clothes (while purifying it two times) will be considered najis on the basis of obligatory precaution, if there is no urine in them. Conversely the water will be considered najis as a confirmed opinion.

49. If one wants to purify such a clothes with pure water which is connected to a kurr source [e.g., under the water tap or by using a hose pipe], even then it is necessary to wash them twice. Similarly, it is necessary to wash the body twice –even when washed in kurr water– while purifying if it has become najis because of urine.

50. If the hand and the clothes become impure because of an intoxicating drink, a single wash can purify them. However, in case of purifying the same with little water, it is necessary to rinse the cloth after washing.

51. Utensils and cups that have become impure because of intoxicating drink should be washed three times if purified with little water. If they are purified with pure water connected to a kurr source, even then it should be washed three times, as a matter of obligatory precaution.

52. A single wash can purify the hand and the clothes that have become impure by licking of a dog. Such a clothes, need to be rinsed if it is purified by little water. (See the question–answer section below.)

53. Utensils and cups that have become impure by licking of a dog or by the dog drinking from them can be purified as follows: first they should be cleaned by using earth or dust, and then by washing them twice with water.

Questions and Answers

54. **Question:** The earth is one of the purifying agents. Following the example of a shoe's sole that can be purified by walking on the earth, would the same rule apply to car tires?

55. **Answer:** The earth cannot purify the tires.

56. **Question:** Where does the domino effect of mutanajjis items stop when it is no longer wet?1

57. **Answer:** The first mutanajjis item would make the item that comes into contact with it impure; similarly, the second mutanajjis would make the item that comes into contact with it impure; but the third mutanajjis can no longer make other items impure, irrespective of whether it is wet or dry.

58. **Question:** If a dog licks my body or clothes, how should I purify it?

Answer: It is sufficient to wash it once. However, if the water is little, it is necessary to rid it of the water by wringing.

59. **Question:** Are the Sikhs considered to be among the followers of the past revealed religions like the Jews and the Christians?

Answer: They are not counted among the People of the (Revealed) Books (the Ahlul Kitab).

60. **Question:** Are the Bhuddhists among the Ahlul Kitab?

Answer: They are not from them.

61. **Question:** Can Muslim, who rents a fully furnished house in the West, consider everything in it to be ritually pure as long as he does not find any trace of impure things in it, even if the previous occupant was from Ahlul Kitab, i.e., a Christian or a Jew? What if the previous occupant was a Bhuddhist or an atheist who does not believe in God and the prophets?

Answer: Yes, he can consider everything in the house ritually pure as long as he does not know that it has become impure. Just conjecture or doubt about impurity is of no value.

62. **Question:** The floor of most houses in the West is covered with carpet which is glued to the floor in such a way that it is difficult to lift it off. How can such a carpet be rendered pure (tahir), if it becomes impure with urine or blood? The water used to purify in both the cases could be qalil or kathir. Please explain the ruling in both cases.

Answer: If it is possible to wipe the water off the carpet by using a piece of cloth or a vacuum cleaner, it can be purified with qalil water, provided that the water is wiped off the carpet, in the process. Conversely, it must be purified by kathir water [i.e., by using a hose pipe connected to the tap].

63. **Question:** In the West, there are many public laundry places in which Muslims and non-Muslims wash their clothes. Is it permissible for us to pray in the clothes washed in such facilities, especially when we have no knowledge whether or not the washing machines are connected to the kurr water² at some stages of the washing, and whether or not it purifies the clothes in the process of washing?

Answer: There is no problem in praying in those clothes that were pure before washing them [in such facilities] as long as you are not aware that they have become impure. [In other words, what goes in the public washing machine as pure comes out as pure unless you are sure that it has become impure.]

Similarly, [you can pray in] the impure clothes [that were washed in the public laundry machines] provided that you are reassured:

- a. that the impure element, if any, has been washed away;
- b. that the pure water covered the entire impure area twice (if it had become impure by urine and even if the water was connected to kurr source as an obligatory precaution) or just once (if it had become impure by other elements);

c. and that the water was removed from the clothes by wringing or other similar method [i.e., spinning of the machine] if it was qalil.

However, if you are not sure and just have conjecture that the garment has been purified as per religious requirement, the previously impure garment will still be considered impure and praying in it would not be valid.

64. **Question:** Can the clothes washed with liquid detergent in laundry facilities owned by a non-Muslim be considered tahir while knowing that Muslims as well as non-Muslims wash their clothes there?

Answer: If you do not know that the clothes have come into contact with a source of najasah, you can consider them tahir (pure).

65. **Question:** Some soaps contain pigs' fat or other animals not slaughtered Islamically. Furthermore, we do not know whether or not chemical change has taken place in the manufacturing process. Can such soaps be considered tahir? [Chemical change is a purifying agent in the sense that it purifies a najis item.]

Answer: If it is proven to contain those [impure] elements, it should be considered impure, except if the occurrence of chemical change is proven. Such a change is not proven in manufacturing of soaps.

66. **Question:** A toothbrush that contains bristles from the hair of a pig: is it permissible to buy, sell and use it? Does the mouth become impure by using such a toothbrush?

Answer: It is permissible to buy, sell and use it; however, the mouth will become impure by using it; and the mouth will become pure by taking that toothbrush out and getting rid of the remaining toothpaste from the mouth.

67. **Question:** If blood is seen in the yolk or the white part of the egg, does it make the egg impure and haram for us? Is there a solution for it?

Answer: The clot of blood inside the egg is pure, but it is haram [for consumption]. Therefore, the egg can be eaten by removing the blood from it, provided it not very minute and been absorbed in it. [In the latter case, is not removable, then the egg becomes haram.]

68. **Question:** Are alcoholic beverages pure? Is beer pure?

Answer: There is no doubt about the impurity of alcoholic drinks. As far as beer (fuqa¹) is concerned, it is impure on the basis of precaution; however, there is no doubt in it being haram.

69. **Question:** The people residing in Europe are of different faiths, nationalities and religions; and when we buy moist or wet food items, the shopkeeper may touch it with his hands. Since we do not know his religion, can we consider that food as pure?

Answer: As long as it is not known that the hands of the shopkeeper were najis, the food is to be considered tahir.

70. **Question:** What about the leather products made in a European country, if we are unaware of the source of that leather? It is said that some European countries import cheap leather from Muslim countries and then use it for manufacturing various products. Can we consider such leather pure? Are we allowed to say salat in them? Can such a weak probability [about it originating from a Muslim country] be given any credence?

Answer: If the probability of the leather originating from a zabiha (an animal slaughtered Islamically) source is so weak that people would not normally give any credence (for example, the probability of 2%), it is to be considered impure and this cannot be used in salat. But if the probability is not so weak, it can be considered pure and using it in salat would be permissible.

1. Translator's Note: An item which is impure by itself is known as 'ayn najis or simply najis; the item that becomes impure by coming into wet contact with an 'ayn najis is known as "mutanajjis," that is impure by secondary reason.

2. Translator's Note: All laundry machines are connected to kurr source because it comes from the main reservoir supplying the water to the city.

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