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Wajib Covering During Salat

The schools concur that it is *wajib* upon both men and women to cover those parts of their bodies during *salat* which should ordinarily be kept covered before 'strangers'. Beyond that their positions differ. Is it *wajib* for a woman to cover, fully or partly, her face and hands during *salat*, although she is not required to do so outside *salat*? Is it *wajib* for a man to cover other parts of his body during *salat* apart from the area between the navel and the knees, though it is not *wajib* to do so outside *salat*?

The Hanafis observe: It is *wajib* upon a woman to cover the back of her hands and the soles of her feet as well, and upon a man to cover his knees in addition to the area between the navel and the knees.

The Shafi'is and Malikis say: It is permissible for a woman to keep her face and both the palms and the back of her hands uncovered during *salat*.

The Hanbalis state: It is not permissible for her to expose any part except the face.

The Imamis observe: It is *wajib* for both men and women to cover only those parts of their body during *salat* which they are supposed to cover ordinarily in the presence of a 'stranger'. Hence it is permissible for a woman to expose during *salat* that part of her face which is washed during *wudu'*; her hands up to the wrists, and her feet up to the ankles both the back as well as the palms of hands and the soles of feet. For a man, it is *wajib* to cover the rear and the private parts, though better to cover the entire area between the navel and the knees.

The Requirements for the Covering during Salat

The covering should meet the following requirements where the ability and freedom to meet them exist:

1.Taharah

The purity of the covering and the body are necessary for the validity of *salat* in the opinion of all the schools, although each of them concedes certain exceptions in accordance with the following details:

The Imamis state: Blood from wounds and sores, irrespective of its quantity, is considered excusable on the dress as well as the body if its removal entails difficulty and harm (*mashaqqah wa haraj*). A blood spot smaller than the size of a dirham coin, regardless of its being due to one's blood or that of someone else, is also excusable provided that: it is in a single place and not in different places; it is not the blood of *hayd*, *nifas* and *istihadah*; it is not the blood of anything intrinsically *najis*, such as dog and pig, or the blood of a dead body (*maytah*).

Also excusable is the impurity (*najasah*) of anything that does not constitute part of essential dress during *salat*, e.g. a sash, cap, socks, shoes, ring, anklet and that which one carries with oneself, e.g. knife or currency. The *najasah* of the dress of a woman rearing a child, irrespective of whether she is the mother or someone else, is exempted on condition that it be difficult for her to change it and that she washes it once every day. In other words, in their opinion every *najasah* on dress or body is exempted in conditions of emergency (*idtirar*).

The Malikis observe: Cases of uncontrolled discharge of urine or excrement, as well as piles, are excusable; so is any impurity on the body or clothes of a woman suckling an infant that may be soiled by the infant's urine or faeces. So also are exempted the body and clothes of a butcher, surgeon and scavenger. Also exempted is: blood – even that of a pig – if it is less than the size of a dirham coin: the discharge from boils, the excrement of fleas, and other things which need not be mentioned because they occur rarely.

The Hanafis say: *Najasah*, blood or anything else, if less than the size of a dirham coin is exempted. Also exempted in emergencies is the urine and excrement of a cat and mouse. Tiny splashes – as small as the point of a needle – of urine, the blood that unavoidably stains a butcher, and the mud on roads – even if it is usually mixed with *najasah* and provided the *najasah* itself is not visible – are exempted. Consequently, they consider *najasah* in a small quantity as exempted, such as the urine of an animal eating which is *halal*, if it covers a fourth of the clothes and less than one–fourth of the body.

According to the Shafi'is, every *najasah* which is in such a small quantity that the eye cannot see it is exempted. So is the mud on roads which is mixed with a small quantity of *najasah*, worms present in fruits and cheese, *najis* liquids added in medicines and perfumes, excrements of birds, *najis* hair in small quantity if they do not belong to a dog or a pig, and other things as well which are mentioned in detailed works.

The Hanbalis say: Minute quantities of blood and pus are exempted, and so is the mud on roads whose *najasah* is certain, as well as the *najasah* that enters the eyes and washing which is harmful.

2. Wearing Silk

There is consensus among the schools that wearing silk and gold is *haram* for men both during and outside *salat*, while it is permissible for women. This is in accordance with this statement of the Prophet

(S):

حرّم لباس الحرير والذهب على ذكور أُمتي، وأحلّ لإناثهم

“Wearing silk and gold is unlawful for the men of my ummah, while it is lawful for its women”.

Accordingly, the Imamis observe: A man’s *salat* is not valid if he wears pure silk and any clothing embroidered with gold during it, regardless of whether it is a waistband, cap, socks, or even a gold ring. They allow wearing silk during *salat* in times of illness and during war.

The Shafi’is state: If a man performs *salat* while wearing silk or over something made of it, it will be considered a *haram* act, though his *salat* will be valid (al-Nawawi, *Sharh al-Muhadhdhab,* iii, 179). I have not found an express statement in the books of the remaining schools concerning the validity or invalidity of *salat* performed in silk, though the Hanafis as well as the Hanbalis (in accordance with one of two narrations) concur with the Shafi’is regarding the general rule that if there is any command prohibiting something which is not directly connected with *salat* such as the command prohibiting usurpation - the *salat* will be valid if it is not observed and the person will be considered as having performed a *wajib* and a *haram* act together. Accordingly the *salat* performed in a dress of silk is valid.

The author of *Al-fiqh ‘ala al-madhahib al-’arba’ah* reports a consensus (for the Sunni schools) that that it is valid for a man constrained to perform *salat* while wearing silk, and it is not *wajib* for him to repeat it.

3. Lawfulness of the Clothing

The Imamis consider it necessary that the clothing worn be lawfully owned. Hence if a person performs *salat* in usurped clothes with the knowledge of their being so, his *salat* is *batil* (invalid). This is also the opinion of Ibn Hanbal in one of the two statements narrated from him.

The other schools regard *salat* in usurped clothes as valid on the grounds that the prohibition does not directly relate to *salat* so as to invalidate it.

The Imamiyyah are very strict concerning usurpation, and some of them even observe: If a person performs *salat* in clothes in which a single thread is usurped, or carries with him an usurped knife, dirham, or any other thing, his *salat* will not be valid. But they also say: If one performs *salat* in usurped clothes out of ignorance or forgetfulness, his *salat* is valid.

4. The Skin of Animals Not Used for Food

The Imamis are alone in holding that it is invalid to perform *salat* while wearing the skin (even if tanned) of an animal whose flesh is not allowed to be eaten, as well as anything consisting its hair, wool, fur or feathers. The same is true of clothes bearing any secretion from its body- eg. sweat and saliva - as long

as it is wet.

Hence, even if a single hair of a cat or any such animal happens to be present on the dress of a person performing *salat* and if he performs it with the knowledge of its presence, his *salat* is invalid (*batil*).

They exclude wax, honey, the blood of bugs; lice, fleas and other insects which have no flesh, as well as the hair, sweat and saliva of human beings.

They also consider *salat* invalid if any part of a dead animal (*maytah*) happens to be on the clothes, irrespective of whether the animal is one used for food or not, whether its blood flows when cut or not, and its skin is tanned or not.

A Subsidiary Issue

If there is only a single clothing to cover the body and that too is *najis* to an extent that is not excusable, what should one do if he has no alternative other than either performing *salat* in the *najis* clothing or in the state of nature?

The Hanbalis say: He should perform *salat* in the *najis* clothing, but it is *wajib* upon him to repeat it later.

The Malikis and a large number of Imamis observe: He should perform *salat* in the *najis* clothing and its repetition is not *wajib* upon him.

The Hanafis and the Shafi'is state: He should perform *salat* naked and it is not valid for him to cover himself with the *najis* clothing.

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