

Purification Within Islam

How the Body is used to Express Religious Ideas of Purity



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What?
MUSLIMS

Why?
MUSLIMS

Spiritual Requirements of Purification

- ◆ Purification is achieved through:
 - ◆ Kindness
 - ◆ Concern for others
 - ◆ Gratitude
 - ◆ Openness to God
 - ◆ Sensitivity to moral issues

Physical Requirements of Purification

- ◆ This is done through the avoidance of certain substances and activities
- ◆ The performance of specific rituals

Reasons for Impurity

- ◆ A person enters a state of impurity when he or she is in contact with a substance that leaves its proper place in the body. Some examples of impure substances are: vomit, pus, blood, urine, fecal matter. When a person enters a state of impurity, it often coincides with an act for which an individual requires privacy.

Variations of Impurity

- ◆ *Najasa* = external pollution
- ◆ *Hadath* = impurity caused by certain activities

Hadath

Minor hadath

- ◆ Sleeping Intoxication
- ◆ Passing wind Excretion
- ◆ Fainting Urination

Major hadath

- ◆ Intercourse
- ◆ Menstruation

Substances NOT thought to be impure are: Tears, sweat, saliva, mucus, milk

Removing Impurity

- ◆ Ablutions – Ritual *wudu*
 - ◆ Before prayer, the believer washes his or her face, hands to the elbows, head, mouth, nose, ears, neck, and feet.
- ◆ Baths – Lustration or *ghusl*
 - ◆ It is important to keep a clean mouth and fresh breath for prayer.
 - ◆ Baths are recommended before attending Friday prayers at the mosque.
 - ◆ Sand, soil, or dust may be used if water is unavailable (*tayammum*), although it does not keep the person in a state of ritual purity as water does.
- ◆ Circumcision
 - ◆ This is considered to be an important purification ritual. Although the *Qur'an* does not mention it, it is often seen as a mark of a believer.

Purification is part of every-day life for a Muslim.

Religious Belief

- ◆ One must be in a state of purity in order to take part in certain rituals or acts, such as:
 - ◆ Performing the *salat* (daily ritual prayer).
 - ◆ Walking circles around the *Ka'ba*
 - ◆ Handling the *Qur'an*
- ◆ Imitation of Abraham, the Father of all Muslims, as many of his contributions to Islam are concerns of personal hygiene.
- ◆ Muhammad is thought to have said, "Under every hair is an impurity."
- ◆ Purification allows a believer to enter into a sacred time and space.
- ◆ If one is not pure, his or her prayers are invalid.

Social Expectations

- ◆ During the time of the Ottoman Empire, and possibly much earlier, public baths were constructed across the Middle East. The baths made cleanliness the standard and purification an expectation.

Social Class

- ◆ Emulation of the wealthy
 - ◆ In pre-Islamic Arabia, it was a sign of high and exclusive status for wealthy women to wear head coverings.
 - ◆ This form of social exclusivity appears to have been absorbed into Islamic practices as a form of ritual social purity.

Folklore

- ◆ A woman who has not bathed for more than 40 days, which is unacceptable based on Islamic standards of purity, becomes an *almasti*, a powerful, mischievous being.
- ◆ *Almastis* have an unknown origin in pre-Islamic times and are known from Central Asia to Northern Africa.

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