

Ruling About Eating and Drinking with The Left Hand

Darulifta Ahlesunnat

(Dawateislami)

Question

What do the noble scholars and jurists of Islamic law say about the following: We were taught from a young age to always eat and drink with the right hand and that eating and drinking with the left is prohibited. I wanted to ask, what is the Shari' ruling about this? Is it Wajib to eat and drink with the right hand? Is it totally Haram and impermissible to eat with the left? What is the emphasis on this prohibition? Please provide guidance.

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ
الْجَوَابُ بِعَوْنِ الْمَلِكِ الْوَهَّابِ اللَّهُمَّ هِدَايَةَ الْحَقِّ وَالصَّوَابِ

Eating and drinking with the right hand is from the Sunnah and etiquettes of eating and drinking and the practice of The Messenger ﷺ. He ﷺ commanded this and discouraged eating and drinking with the left hand deeming it to be the way of Satan. Though eating and drinking with the left hand even without an 'Uzr (valid excuse) isn't Haraam and a sin, it is against this Sunnah Mustahabbah and undoubtedly a disliked act in Shari'ah. However, if there is any 'Uzr (valid excuse), such as missing a right hand or the right hand being disabled then there is no issue in eating with the left hand.

Mentioning the blessed practice of The Holy Prophet ﷺ in eating and drinking, it is stated in Sunan Abu Dawood, Sahih Ibn Hibbān, and Musnad Ahmad (the following words are from Sunan Abu Dawood):

أن حارثة بن وهب الخزاعي قال: حدثني حفصة زوج النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم: أن النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم كان يجعل يمينه لطعامه وشرابه وثيابه

Translation: Harisah Bin Wahb Al-Khuza'i said: Hafsa, the wife of The Prophet ﷺ narrated to me that The Messenger ﷺ would use his right hand for eating, drinking, and wearing cloths. (Al-Sunan Li-Abi Dawood, Chapter on the dislike of touching the private part with the right during Istibra', Vol. 1, p. 25, Publ. Dar Al-Risalah Al-'Alamiyah)
It is also narrated in Sunan Abu Dawood:

عن عائشة، قالت: كانت يد رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم اليمنى لظهوره وطعامه، وكانت يده اليسرى لخلائه وما كان من أذى

Translation: It is narrated by Hazrat A'ishah رضي الله تعالى عنها that she said: The right hand of The Messenger ﷺ was for matters like ablution and eating and the left hand for Istinja (i.e., purification after relieving oneself) and other similar acts. (Al-Sunan Li-Abi Dawood, Chapter on the dislike of touching the private part with the right during Istibra', Vol. 1, p. 26, Publ. Dar Al-Risalah Al- 'Alamiyah)

Prohibiting from eating with the left hand, it is stated in Sahih Muslim:

ان رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم قال: لا يأكلن أحد منكم بشماله، ولا يشربن بها، فإن الشيطان يأكل بشماله، ويشرب بها

Translation: The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: None of you should eat with the left hand nor drink with it for Satan eats and drinks with his left hand. (Sahih Muslim, Vol. 3, p. 1598, Publ. Dar Ihya Al-Turas Al- 'Arabiyy, Beirut)

Regarding the Shari' ruling of eating and drinking with the left hand, it is stated in Muwatta Imam Muhammad:

عن جابر بن عبد الله: أن رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم نهى أن يأكل الرجل بشماله، قال محمد: يكره للرجل أن يأكل بشماله

Translation: It is narrated by Jabir Bin Abdullah that The Messenger of Allah ﷺ prohibited for a man to eat with his left. Imam

Muhammad عليه الرحمة stated: It is Makruh for a man to eat with his left hand. (Muwatta Imam Muhammad Ma'a Al-Ta'leeq Al-Mumajjad, Vol. 3, p. 447, Publ. Dar Al-Qalam, Damascus)

It is further stated therein:

قال محمد: لا ينبغي أن يأكل بشماله ولا يشرب بشماله إلا من علة

Translation: Imam Muhammad عليه الرحمة stated: It isn't appropriate for one to eat or drink with his left unless there is any excuse.

(Muwatta Imam Muhammad Ma'a Al-Ta'leeq Al-Mumajjad, Vol. 3, p. 390, Publ. Dar Al-Qalam, Damascus)

It is stated in Mirqat Al-Mafateeh:

(عن جابر قال: نهى رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم أن يأكل الرجل بشماله): أى نهى تنزيه

Translation: It is narrated from Jabir رضي الله تعالى عنه that he said: The Messenger of Allah ﷺ prohibited for a man to eat with his left.

(This prohibition is Tanzih). (Mirqat Al-Mafateeh, Vol. 7, p. 2767, Publ. Dar Al-Fikr, Beirut)

It is further stated:

(عن عمرو بن أبي سلمة رضي الله عنه قال: كنت غلاماً في حجر رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم وكانت يدي تطيش في الصحفة. فقال لي رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم: سم الله وكل بيمينك، وكل مما يليك) ذهب جمهور العلماء إلى أن الأوامر الثلاثة في هذا الحديث للندب

Translation: It has been narrated from Amr Bin Abi Salamah رضي الله عنه that he said: I was a child in the care of The Messenger ﷺ and my hand was moving all around in the dish. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said to me, "Recite the name of Allah, eat with your right, and eat what is near you." Majority of the scholars agree that all three matters mentioned in this Hadith are for Istihbab (being Mustahab). (Mirqat Al-Mafateeh, Vol. 7, p. 2692, Publ. Dar Al-Fikr, Beirut)

Hakeem-Ul-Ummah, Mufti Ahmad Yar Khan Na'eemi رحمه الله تعالى عليه writes in Mir'at Al-Manajeeth:

دائماً ہاتھ سے کھانا پینا مستحب سنت ہے۔

Translation: Eating and drinking with the right hand is a Mustahab Sunnah. (Mir'at Al-Manajeeth, Vol. 5, p. 09, Publ. Na'eemi Kutub Khana)

He also wrote:

بلا مجبوری بائیں ہاتھ سے کھانا پینا مکروہ تنزیہی ہے۔

Translation: Eating and drinking with the left hand without any valid excuse is Makruh Tanzih. (Mir'at Al-Manajeeth, Vol. 6, p. 95, Publ. Na'eemi Kutub Khana)

وَاللَّهُ أَعْلَمُ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ وَرَسُولُهُ أَعْلَمُ صَلَّى اللَّهُ تَعَالَى عَلَيْهِ وَآلِهِ وَسَلَّمَ

(Allah Almighty knows best and His Messenger ﷺ knows best.)

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