

Having the Back Towards the Qiblah When Answering the Call to Nature

Darulifta Ahlesunnat (Dawateislami)

Question

What do the noble scholars and jurists of Islamic law say about the following: While relieving oneself, is it permissible to face or turn one's back to the Qiblah, or not? Also, is Bayt al-Maqdis to the north of Pakistan? Some people say that in Pakistan, the WC or bathroom commode cannot be fitted to face the Qiblah (West), but the back can be towards the Qiblah. Similarly, they cannot be made to face north out of respect, because in that direction is the first Qiblah (Bayt al-Maqdis) and Baghdad. However, the back can be towards that direction. Please provide guidance on whether this is accurate.

Answer

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ
الْجَوَابُ بِعَوْنَانِ الْبَلِكِ الْوَهَابِ الْلَّهُمَّ هَدِّيَّةَ الْحَقِّ وَالصَّوَابِ

Facing the Qiblah or having one's back towards the Qiblah while relieving oneself is Makruh Tahrimi, impermissible, and a sin. For this reason, if the WC or bathroom commode is positioned to face the Qiblah or to have the back towards the Qiblah, it is necessary for the one using the facility to change his sitting position and turn away, as it is not permissible to face the Qiblah or have the back towards the Qiblah while relieving oneself.

Bayt al-Maqdis is not located to the north of Pakistan or India. Instead, it is towards the west but inclined towards the north. Therefore, there is no prohibition in Sharī'ah to face the north or have the back towards the north when relieving oneself.

It is impermissible to face the Qiblah or have one's back towards the Qiblah while relieving oneself. Thus, the Prophet ﷺ stated:

إِذَا أَتَيْتُمُ الْغَائِطَ فَلَا تَسْتَقِبُوا الْقِبْلَةَ وَلَا تَسْتَدِبُرُوهَا

Translation: When any of you go to relieve yourself, neither face the Qiblah nor turn your back towards it. (Sahih al-Bukhari, Vol. 1, p. 57, Publ. Karachi)

Sayyiduna Abu Ayyub al-Ansari رضي الله تعالى عنه states:

قَدْمَنَا الشَّامُ فَوْجَدْنَا مَرَاحِضَ بَنِيَّتَ قَبْلَةَ فَنَنْحَرَفُ وَنَسْتَغْفِرُ اللَّهَ تَعَالَى

Translation: When we arrived in Shaam, we saw that the bathrooms were facing the Qiblah. So, we would turn away (from the Qiblah), and we would seek refuge in the court of Allah Almighty. (Sahih al-Bukhari, Vol. 1, p. 57, Publ. Karachi)

It is stated in Tanwir al-Absar Wa al-Durr al-Mukhtar:

كَرَهٌ تَحْرِيْبًا لِّسْتَقِبَالَ قِبْلَةَ وَاسْتِدَبَارًا، لِّأَجْلِ بَوْلٍ أَوْ غَائِطٍ

Translation: It is Makruh Tahrimi to face the Qiblah or have the back towards it when urinating or defecating. (Tanwir al-Absar Ma'a al-Durr al-Mukhtar Wa Radd al-Muhtar, Vol. 1, p. 608, Publ. Peshawar)

When the Imam of Ahl-us-Sunnah, Imam Ahmad Raza Khan عليه الرحمۃ was asked about a Masjid, he replied:

پیشاب کے وقت منہ نہ قبلہ کو ہونا، جائز، نہ پشت، جو لوگ ایسا کریں خطا کار ہیں، مہتممین مسجد یا اہل محلہ پر واجب ہے کہ ان کا رُخ جنوبی یا شمالاً کریں اور جب تک ایسا نہ ہو پیشاب کرنے والوں پر لازم ہے کہ رُخ بدلتے ہیں۔

Translation: At the time of urinating, it is neither permissible to face the Qiblah nor to have one's back towards it. Those who do so are at fault. It is wajib upon the management of the Masjid or the people of the community to change their direction towards the north or south. Until then, those who urinate there must change their direction when sitting. (Fatawa Razawiyyah, Vol. 4, p. 608, Publ. Raza Foundation, Lahore)

Note – Keep in mind that it is not correct to transmit hearsay about shari'ah rulings unless it was heard from a reliable scholar or it was read from a book written by a reliable scholar. Further, it is only permissible for scholars to inform about shari'ah rulings or deliver speeches. Neither can a non-scholar deliver a speech, nor can they inform about rulings on their own accord. However, it is permissible if a non-scholar only reads out what is written in the book of a Sunni scholar who holds the correct beliefs, and the non-scholar doesn't add anything from himself, given that he is not a fasiq, such as he shaves his beard, etc. In this case, the layman is only a conveyor, and the speech is attributed to the scholar whose book is being read.

Thus, A'la Hazrat, the reviver of the religion, Imam Ahmad Raza Khan رحمۃ اللہ تعالیٰ علیہ gave the following answer to a similar question:

میر مسند بنی صلی اللہ تعالیٰ علیہ وسلم ہے، جاہل اردو خواں اگر اپنی طرف سے کچھ نہ کہے، بلکہ عالم کی تصنیف پڑھ کر سنائے تو اس میں حرج نہیں، بلکہ وہ جاہل فاسق مثلاً داڑھی منڈا وغیرہ نہ ہو کہ اس وقت وہ جاہل سفیرِ مرض ہے اور حقیقتہ و عظاً اس عالم کا جس کی کتاب پڑھی جائے اور اگر ایسا نہیں، بلکہ جاہل خود کچھ بیان کرنے بیٹھے تو اسے وعظ کہنا حرام ہے اور اس کا وعظ سننا حرام ہے۔

Translation: The pulpit is the throne of the Noble Prophet ﷺ. There is no issue if a layman Urdu speaker doesn't say anything on his own accord and only reads from the work of a scholar. But that layman must not be a fasiq, such that he shaves his beard, etc. In this case, the layman is only a conveyor, and the speech is attributed to the scholar whose book is being read. If this isn't the case and the layman speaks on his own accord, it is Haram for him to deliver the speech and for the audience to listen to his speech. (Fatawa Razawiyyah, Vol. 23, p. 409, Publ. Raza Foundation, Lahore)

وَاللَّهُ أَعْلَمُ عَزَّوْ جَلَّ وَرَسُولُهُ أَعْلَمُ صَلَّى اللَّهُ تَحْمِلُ عَلَيْهِ وَالْهُ وَسَلَّمَ

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

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