

Ruling On Rinsing The Mouth And Sniffing Water Up The Nose While Fasting

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(Dawateislami)

Question

What do the scholars of Islam say about the following matter: if ghusl becomes fard due to nocturnal emission while fasting, is it necessary to ensure that water reaches the soft part of the nasal bone? Likewise, what is the ruling on sniffing water up the nose during wuḍū?

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

الْجَوَابُ بِعَوْنِ الْمَلِكِ الْوَهَّابِ اللَّهُمَّ هِدَايَةَ الْحَقِّ وَالصَّوَابِ

To rinse the mouth (washing the inner part of the mouth thoroughly) and to wash the soft part of both nostrils (the soft part ends before the hard nasal bone begins) are the two important *Fard* (obligations) of ghusl. They are both *mu'akkadah sunnahs* in wuḍū. There is no distinction between a fasting and non-fasting person in this regard.

However, if one is not fasting, it is exclusively both sunnah and a *mustahabb* (recommended) act to exaggerate when fulfilling the aforementioned actions. Exaggerating when rinsing the mouth refers to gargling whilst carrying out this action, i.e. water should be made to reach the edge of the throat and swirled thoroughly. Exaggerating when sniffing water up the nose refers to inhaling the water using the breath and making it reach beyond the soft part, until the root of the nasal bone.

As for the fasting person, it is disliked (*makrūh*) for him to adopt the method described above when rinsing the mouth and sniffing water up the nose, as hadith exempt a fasting person from the ruling of exaggerating. Moreover, just a small lack of cautiousness in this regard can lead to the fast becoming invalid. That is to say, a fasting person should not gargle, as there is a chance of water passing down the throat. If this happens, the fast will be nullified. Similarly, water should not be sniffed to make it reach the root of the nasal bone as merely a little inattentiveness could lead to the water reaching the brain, which will also nullify the fast.

It is stated in *Tanwīr al-Abṣār* and *al-Durr al-Mukhtār*,

﴿وفرض الغسل، غسل كل فيه﴾ -- ﴿وانفه﴾ حتى ماتحت الدرر ﴿وباقى بدنه﴾ “ملتقطاً”

“The *Faraid* (obligations) of wuḍū are to wash the entire inner part of the mouth, and the nose to the extent that the area beneath the solidified mucus is washed too, as well as the rest of the body.”¹

It is mentioned in *Marāqī al-Falāḥ Sharḥ Nūr al-Idāḥ*:

﴿وليسن﴾ البالغة في البضضة وهو إيصال الماء لراس الحلق ﴿وبالباغفة﴾ الاستنشاق وهي إيصاله الى فوق البارن ﴿الغير الصائم﴾ والصائم لا يزال فيها

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Exaggerating when rinsing the mouth i.e. making water reach the edge of the throat, and exaggerating when sniffing water up the nose i.e. making water reach beyond the soft part of the nasal bone, is sunnah for that person who is not fasting. The fasting

¹ *Al-Durr al-Mukhtār Ma'a Radd al-Muhtār*, vol. 2, p. 312

person **will not exaggerate** due to the danger of these two things nullifying the fast, as per this saying of the beloved Prophet صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَآلِهِ وَسَلَّمَ, 'Exaggerate when rinsing the mouth and sniffing water up the nose, except when you are fasting.'

'*Allāmah* Sayyid Aḥmad Ṭaḥṭāwī رَحْمَةُ اللهِ عَلَيْهِ writes in the commentary of this text, قوله (والبالغة) فيها هي سنة في الطهارتين على المعتد According to the relied upon opinion, rinsing the mouth and sniffing water up the nose is sunnah in both wuḍū and ghusl."²

Imam of Ahl al-Sunnah, Imam Aḥmad Razā Khān رَحْمَةُ اللهِ عَلَيْهِ writes in *Fatāwa Razawiyah*:

Washing the soft part in both nostrils i.e. washing up until the start of the hard part of the nasal bone (is *Fard* (obligatory) in ghusl), and this is only possible if one takes some water and sniffs it until it reaches there. People are utterly careless in this regard and only make water touch the tip of the nose after which it separates, let alone washing the entire soft part of the nasal bone. It is obvious that water naturally flows downwards. Without sniffing, it does not rise. Let alone the public, sadly even some educated people are embroiled in this. If only they paid attention to the linguistic meaning of *istinshāq*, they would not fall prey to this calamity. *Istinshāq* refers to inhaling something into the nose via the breath - not simply touching the tip of the nose.

Omitting this consistently in wuḍū will lead to the sin of abandoning a sunnah only, as *maḍmaḍah* (rinsing the mouth) and *istinshāq* as per the definitions above are sunnah *mu'akkadah*. Although leaving a sunnah *mu'akkadah* occasionally is not a sin and instead warrants censure, abandoning it frequently will undoubtedly cause one to become a sinner. In any case wuḍū shall still be completed, but ghusl will not be considered complete until the entire mouth till the throat and the soft part of the nose up to the hard nasal bone is washed. Scholars even say if there is solidified mucus in the nose, it is necessary to first remove it. If the water does not pass underneath it, ghusl will be invalid. Not even a fasting person is exempt from this precaution. However, he is not to exceed this lest water reaches the brain, but this is still a sunnah for a non-fasting person.

It is mentioned in *al-Durr al-Mukhtār*, سننه البالغة بجاوزة البارن لغير الصائم, "It is also from the sunnah of ghusl for a non-fasting person to exaggerate when making water reach the area beyond the soft part of the nasal bone."

Elucidating upon this issue, the great imam further said, "It is *fard* in ghusl to make water reach every portion of the mouth until the throat, and to sniff water up the nostrils until the start of the hard nasal bone. These are sunnah *mu'akkadah* in wuḍū."³

In the scenario that was asked about, one will have to fulfil the 3 *Fard* (obligatory) actions of ghusl. Meaning, it will remain obligatory to make water flow properly over the entire body, rinse the mouth and make water reach the entire internal soft part of the nose. If this is not done, major ritual impurity will not be removed. A person in this state cannot enter the masjid or offer salah, as this would be impermissible and sinful. It is *fard* to repeat all salah offered in this state.

² *Maraqī al-Falah Ma'a Hashiya al-Tahtaawi*, p. 70

³ *Al-Fatāwā al-Razawiyah*, vol. 1, part 2, pp. 595,596

Warning

In the blessed month of Ramaḍān, some are seen saying the following: “When fasting, the act of rinsing the mouth and sniffing water up the nose whilst doing *farḍ* ghusl will be carried out after sunset, otherwise the fast will break.” Just a few days ago, it was related regarding an imam of a masjid who told attendees, “If ghusl becomes *farḍ* while fasting, it will be valid even if water does not reach the soft part of the nasal bone.” When people persisted in seeking clarification, he continued to say, “It is not necessary for a fasting person to sniff water up the nose during *farḍ* ghusl.” **الْأَمَانُ وَالْحَفِيفُ**

The aforementioned two views indicate unawareness of true Islamic teachings and ignorance. The outcome of relating these incorrect rulings will manifest in the public performing *farḍ* ghusl in said manner and becoming content after offering salah that both the fast and salah are fulfilled. Whereas due to *farḍ* ghusl not being valid, all salah offered will be considered invalid and will have to be atoned for.

Remember that it is obligatory for every Muslim to learn necessary Islamic rulings as per their situation. In comparison to the public, people who are from a religious fraternity and especially imams of masjids are even more obligated to know the correct positions of such necessary rulings, as the public often ask them questions regarding their daily life. Upon receiving the answers, they act accordingly. If an incorrect answer is given, the repercussions will be severe. People will act upon it and fall into sin, but the burden of sin will also fall upon the shoulders of the imam, who answered according to his own assumption. Strong condemnation regarding this act has been mentioned in a hadith narrated by *sayyidunā* Abū Hurayrah رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُ, found in *Mishkāt al-Maṣābīḥ* and extracted from *Abū Dawūd*.

The beloved Prophet صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَآلِهِ وَسَلَّمَ said, “Whoever was given a legal verdict (*fatwā*) without knowledge, its sin will fall upon the one who issued the verdict.”⁴

It is narrated in al-Jāmi‘ al-Ṣaghīr on the authority of *sayyidunā* ‘Ali كَرَّمَ اللهُ وَجْهَهُ “Whoever gave a religious verdict without knowledge is cursed by the angels of the sky and earth.”⁵

Hence, repentance is necessary for those people who, based on their foolishness and lack of knowledge regarding Islamic rulings, have been informing the public that **1)** the act of rinsing the mouth and sniffing water up the nose while doing *farḍ* ghusl in a state of fast, will be carried out after sunset or the fast will break; and **2)** it is not obligatory on those fasting to sniff water up the nose during *farḍ* ghusl. They must also make the public aware of the correct rulings and acquire knowledge from erudite Sunni scholars and muftis. As long as they have not gained proficiency in Islamic knowledge, they must refrain from mentioning religious rulings.

وَاللَّهُ أَعْلَمُ عَزَّوَجَلَّ وَرَسُولُهُ أَعْلَمُ صَلَّى اللهُ تَعَالَى عَلَيْهِ وَآلِهِ وَسَلَّمَ

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⁴ *Mishkāt al-Maṣābīḥ*, p. 35

⁵ *Al-Jāmi‘ al-Ṣaghīr Ma‘a Fayz al-Qadeer*, vol. 6, p. 101

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