

Can A Woman Bathe During Her Periods?

Darulifta Ahlesunnat

(Dawateislami)

Question

What do the scholars of Islam say regarding the following matter: In our rural areas, it is widely held that a woman cannot bathe during her menses. What does Islamic law say regarding this?

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

الْجَوَابُ بِعَوْنِ الْمَلِكِ الْوَهَّابِ اللَّهُمَّ هِدَايَةَ الْحَقِّ وَالصَّوَابِ

The claim that ‘a woman cannot bathe during her menses’, is a misunderstanding amongst laypeople. In reality, there is no harm in bathing to remove bad odour and dirt or to cool down. This is the case even though bathing to attain ritual purity will not be possible until she reaches the correct time for the cessation of her bleeding. There is no harm in her bathing prior to that (cessation of bleeding) for the purpose of keeping clean. That which has been mentioned in the question as being widespread amongst people, has no basis in Islamic law.

On the contrary, Islamic law encourages a woman to bathe on some specific occasions, even if she is in the state of menses or post-partum bleeding. It is *Mustahabb* (recommended) to bathe prior to entering the state of *iḥrām*. If a woman in menses or post-partum bleeding is entering the *iḥrām* state for ḥajj or ‘umrah, this bathing will be recommended for her too. In fact, the jurists are agreed upon its permissibility.

During the farewell ḥajj, the wife of Hazrat Abū Bakr Ṣiddīq, Sayyidatuna Asmā' b. ‘Umayy, gave birth to Sayyiduna Muhammad b. Abi Bakr. This occurred at Dhū al-Ḥulayfah.

As the *mīqāt* of the people of Madīnah is Dhū al-Ḥulayfah, the Prophet صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَآلِهِ وَسَلَّمَ ordered her through Abū Bakr Ṣiddīq, to bathe and enter the *iḥrām* state. If it were forbidden for women in a state of post-partum bleeding or menses to bathe in these days, why would the Prophet صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَآلِهِ وَسَلَّمَ have ordered it?

It should be remembered that this answer is from an Islamic legal perspective. If bathing is harmful for a particular woman due to a medical reason, she may act according to her doctor’s advice.

It is permissible to bathe in the state of post-partum bleeding, just as it is narrated by Imam Muslim on the authority of Hadrat ‘Āisha Ṣiddīqa رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهَا:

نَفَسَتْ إِسْمَاءُ بِنْتُ عُبَيْسٍ بِمُحَمَّدِ بْنِ أَبِي بَكْرٍ بِالشَّجَرَةِ فَأَمَرَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ ابَا بَكْرٍ بِأَمْرَهَا أَنْ تَغْتَسِلَ وَتَهَلَّ

Sayyidatuna Asmā' b. ‘Umayy رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهَا gave birth to Muhammad b. Abī Bakr at Shajarah (a place in Dhū al-Ḥulayfah). The Messenger of Allah صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَآلِهِ وَسَلَّمَ commanded Abu

Bakr رضى الله عنه to convey to her, that she should take a bath and then enter the state of *iḥrām*.¹

Imam al-Nawawī al-Shāfi‘ī رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ عَلَيْهِ comments on this hadith:

وفيه صحة احرام النفساء والحائض واستحباب اغتسالها للاحرام وهو موجب على الامر به لكن مذهبنا ومذهب مالك وابن حنيفة والجمهور انه مستحب وقال الحسن واهل الظاهر: هو واجب.²

Imams Abū Dāwūd and Tirmidhi both narrate from the Companion ‘Abdullāh b. ‘Abbās رضى الله عنه, that the Messenger of Allah صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَآلِهِ وَسَلَّمَ declared:

واللفظ للترمذى ”ان النفساء والحائض تغتسل وتحرم وتقتضى البناسك كلها غير انها لا تطوف بالبيت

Indeed, the woman in post-partum bleeding and menses should bathe, enter *iḥrām* and complete all ḥajj rites, except that she should not perform circumambulation of the sacred House.³

Regarding bathing for the *iḥrām*, it is mentioned in *Tabyīn al-Ḥaqāiq*, *Hāshiyat al-Sharunbulālī* and *Minḥat al-Khālīq*:

واللفظ للاول ”والبراد بهذا الغسل تحصيل النظافة وإزالة الرائحة لا الطهارة حتى تؤمر به الحائض والنفساء -- ولا يتصور حصول الطهارة لها

Below this, in *Hāshiyat al-Shilbī*:⁴

قوله والبراد بهذا الغسل الخ قال الاتقاني: وهذا الغسل اعنى غسل الاحرام ليس بواجب ولكنه من باب التنظيف كما في الجعة بدلالة اغتسال الحائض والنفساء ملتقطاً

In *Imdād al-Fattāh*:⁵

وسنن الحج: منها الاغتسال ولو للحائض ونفساء او الوضوء اذا اراد الاحرام

In *Baḥr al-Rā’iq*:⁶

قوله واذا اردت ان تحرم فتوضا والغسل افضل قد تقدم دليله في الغسل وهو للنظافة لا للطهارة فيستحب في حق الحائض أو النفساء والصبي

The Hanafi jurist, Mufti Amjad ‘Alī al-A‘zamī رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ عَلَيْهِ said:

When that place (i.e. *mīqāt*) draws near, use the miswak, perform Wudu and bathe well. If you are unable to bathe, perform Wudu. Even the woman experiencing post-partum bleeding and menses, and the child, should bathe and enter the *iḥrām* in a state of purity.⁷

وَاللَّهُ أَعْلَمُ عَزَّوَجَلَّ وَرَسُولُهُ أَعْلَمُ صَلَّى اللَّهُ تَعَالَى عَلَيْهِ وَآلِهِ وَسَلَّمَ

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¹ Al-Jāmi‘ al-Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim, vol. 1, p. 385, published in Karachi

² Al-*Minḥāj Sharḥ* al-Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim, vol. 1, p. 385, published in Karachi

³ Jāmi‘ al-Tirmidhi, vol. 3, p. 281, published by Dār Ihyā‘ al-Turāth

⁴ Tabyīn al-Ḥaqāiq wa Ḥāshiyat al-Sharunbulālī, vol. 2, p. 8, published in Multan

⁵ Imdād al-Fattāh *Sharḥ Nūr al-Īqāḥ*, p. 688, published in Quetta

⁶ Baḥr al-Rā’iq, vol. 2, p. 344, publisher al-Maktab al-Islami

⁷ Bahār-i-Sharī‘at, vol. 1, part 6, p. 1071, Maktabat al-Madina, Karachi



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