

CLEANLINESS AND CLEANSING

Human beings prefer by nature to keep clean and abhor uncleanness and pollution. Transcending this natural urge for cleanliness Islam has innovated a novel term of *Taharah* [cleanliness] and imparted it the most comprehensive scope and has correspondingly defined pollution [*najasah*] in a way that is most consonant with the nature and objective of cleanliness. If we interpret the Islamic faith in this perspective we can say that its sole purpose is the most comprehensive purification of human body and soul, covering thoughts and beliefs as well as extrovert behaviour and external body parts. Beginning with doctrinal purity of *Tawhid* [monotheism] and prohibition of the pollution of *shirk* it proceeds to purify man's inner self of all the evils of avarice, jealousy, lying, slandering and backbiting as well as to cleanse the external parts and organs by prescribing regular ablution [*wudhu*] and ritual bathing [*ghusl*]. Addressing His Messenger Allah (*T'ala*) ordains:

﴿وَيَا بَاكَ فَطَهِّرْ﴾ المدثر: ٤

(Translation of meaning) [“And purify thy raiment” (Al-Mudaththir: 4)].

In another place, addressing the community of believers Allah (*T'ala*) proclaims:

﴿مَا يُرِيدُ اللَّهُ لِيَجْعَلَ عَلَيْكُمْ مِّنْ حَرَجٍ وَلَٰكِنْ يُرِيدُ لِيُطَهِّرَكُمْ﴾ المائدة: ٦

(Translation of meaning) [“Allah would not place a burden on you, but He would purify you and would perfect His grace upon you, that ye may give thanks” (Al-Maedah: 6)].

Allah (*T'ala*) is clean of all defects. He is the refuge of all His bondmen. How can He like any unclean and impure person? Cleanliness and purity are the very first steps towards access to Allah. It is for this reason that the Messenger of Allah (*sallAllahu 'alayhi wa sallam*) said that “Cleanliness is half of the faith [*Imaan*]” (Muslim). Because of such importance assigned to cleanliness it is imperative that we know the Islamic concept of cleanliness and the Islamic way of cleansing. Cleanliness [*taharah*] is the opposite of dirtiness or pollution [*najasah*]. Cleanliness means being free from dirt, filth and pollution. It is, therefore, essential to understand the nature of filth and pollution which has to be avoided.

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