

THE RULING OF WEARING ONE'S SHOES IN SALAAH

Question: Some *ahaadith* indicate that wearing one's shoes in *salaah* is permissible. Is this correct? In the light of such *ahaadith*, could we say that wearing one's shoes in *salaah* is a *sunnah*?

Answer: In view of the writings of some '*ulama*, we could conclude that there are two conditions for the permissibility of wearing one's shoes in *salaah* viz.

- a. *Tahaarah* of the shoes – There must be no *najaasah* on the shoes.
- b. Ability to place the tips of one's toes on the ground facing the *qiblah* while in *sajdah* – Placing one's toes on the ground in this manner is compulsory for the validity of *sajdah*. This was possible with the shoes worn by Rasulullah *sallallahu alaihi wasallam* because the soles were thin and the toes were open. On the contrary, the soles of shoes and sandals these days are so thick that making *sajdah* in the above manner is impossible.

The second condition, however, is debatable. As mentioned in Ibn Nujaim's *Al-Bahr Ar-Raa'iq* and Ibn Aabideen's *Radd-ul-Muhtaar* placing a single toe on the ground is sufficient for

validity of *sajdah*.¹ Furthermore, the above do not mention the requirement of the toe facing the *qiblah*. Hence, the *sajdah* would be valid if the tips of the toes merely touch the ground but do not face the *qiblah*. Thus, placing the tips of one's toes on the ground facing the *qiblah* is a requirement for a perfect *sajdah* but not a requirement for its validity. Nevertheless:

- a. The first condition (*tahaarah* of the shoe) is of paramount importance, especially in the present world.
- b. Given the type of footwear worn these days, ability to place the tip of the toe/s on the ground is often doubtful.

Besides:

1. Wearing one's shoes in *salaah* is merely a *rukhsah* (concession) and cannot be classified as a *mustahab* (let alone *sunnah*) because doing so is not something required for the enhancement of *salaah*.
2. Although shoes fall under 'the apparel of beauty' and we have been encouraged to wear such apparel in *salaah*, the *najaasah* found on them reduces their status in this regard.
3. If it is still argued that shoes fall within the ambits of 'adornment' and should be worn in *salaah*, it could also be argued that shoes should not be worn in *salaah* because they generally carry *najaasah* and removal of *najaasah* before *salaah* is imperative. Thus, there is a contradiction of

¹ *Al-Bahr Ar-Raa'iq* (V.1 Pg.293) and *Radd-ul-Muhtaar* (V.2 Pg.167)

jalb-ul-maslahah (taking benefit) and *daf'-ul-madarrah* (avoiding harm). (Wearing one's shoes is *jalb-ul-maslahah* and removing them is *daf'-ul-madarrah*.) In instances of this nature preference is always given to the latter.

4. Those scholars who regarded wearing shoes in *salaah* as *mustahab* only did so on the basis of opposing the Jews. Since present-day Jews pray with their shoes, would opposing them not be in performing *salaah* without them?
5. Wearing shoes in *salaah* was not a standard practice of Rasulullah *sallallahu alaihi wasallam*. As mentioned by Imaam Nawawi (ra) the word *kaana* denotes single occurrence of the accompanying action instead of continuity and repetition. Hence, we cannot prove that Rasulullah *sallallahu alaihi wasallam* regularly wore his shoes in *salaah* from the hadith of Anas (ra) in which he was replied in the affirmative to the question:

أكان رسول الله صلى الله عليه و سلم يصلي في النعلين

6. The fact that Rasulullah *sallallahu alaihi wasallam* performed *salaah* without his shoes on the occasion of the Conquest of Makkah leads us to the conclusion that towards the end of his life, Rasulullah *sallallahu alaihi wasallam* did not perform *salaah* with his shoes.
7. Besides, it is mentioned in the footnotes of the *Ma'aani Al-Aathaar* on the authority of Imaam Nawawi (ra) that this (performing *salaah* with shoes) should not be allowed for others (besides Rasulullah *sallallahu alaihi wasallam*)

because their caution (while walking on the roads and alleys) can never be the same as his. In simpler words, nobody else's shoes can be as *taahir* as his. At this juncture it could be argued that Sahaabah (ra) performed *salaah* wearing their shoes. The answer, however, is simple: Can anybody else's caution compare to theirs?

8. With regards the above point, Imaam Nawai (ra) states further that if anybody does perform *salaah* wearing his shoes, he should not do so in the *masjid*. In fact, if he has to enter the *masjid* carrying his shoes in his hands, he should make sure that they are covered (to avoid soiling the *masjid*).
9. It is narrated from Imaam Shaafi'ie (ra) that the demand of *adab* (respect) is to perform *salaah* without one's shoes. (Performing *salaah* with one's shoes is disrespectful.) This is probably based on the fact that when Nabi Moosa (as) entered the valley of *Tuwa* to 'speak to Allah', he was told, "Remove your shoes, you are in the holy valley of *Tuwa*".

Question: What about the hadith that Rasulullah *sallallahu alaihi wasallam* did not remove his shoes in *salaah* except once?

Answer: This *hadith* is with regards removal of shoes in the course of *salaah*. The meaning of the *hadith* is that there was only one occasion wherein Rasulullah *sallallahu alaihi wasallam* removed his shoes during the *salaah*. It does not mean that

there was only one occasion wherein Rasulullah *sallallahu alaihi wasallam* performed *salaah* without his shoes.

Question: What is the opinion of ‘Allaamah ‘Aini (ra) in this regard? Did he regard performing *salaah* with one’s shoes as *sunnah*?

Answer: Objecting to Ibn Daqeeq Al-‘Eid (ra)’s opinion that performing *salaah* with one’s shoes is merely a concession and not *mustahab*, ‘Aini (ra) states, “Why is it not *mustahab*? In fact, it should be among the *sunan*.” He thereafter substantiates his claim by citing the *hadith* “Oppose the Jews because they do not perform *salaah* with their shoes and socks.” He then concludes that “it is *mustahab* on the basis of opposition to the Jews, but it is not *sunnah* because doing so is not *maqsood bi-dhaat* (a primary objective of *salaah*)”. As previously mentioned, the *Fuqahaa* who regarded *salaah* with one’s shoes as *mustahab* did so solely on the basis of opposition to the Jews. Since present-day Jews no longer remove their shoes at the time of prayer, would opposing them not be in performing *salaah* without our shoes? Towards the end of the discussion ‘Aini (ra) quotes the *hadith* “I saw Rasulullah *sallallahu alaihi wasallam* perform *salaah* with and without shoes.” He then comments: “This indicates permissibility without *karaahah* (detestation). This is obviously on condition that the two conditions mentioned in the beginning of this article are fulfilled. Remember, the dispute is

not with regards permissibility in the presence of these conditions. Instead, the dispute is regarding permissibility in contemporary circumstances (the predominance of *najaasah* on our shoes and the type of shoes we wear) and whether performing *salaah* with shoes is a concession or a *sunnah*. At the end, 'Aini (ra) quotes from Imaam Ghazzaali (ra) that some of the '*ulamaa* said that performing *salaah* with one's shoes is better.² However, the word بعضهم indicates that this was not the opinion of the majority. Thus, 'Iraqi (ra) mentioned in his commentary of *Jaami'-ut-Tirmidhi* that: "The *Sahaabah* and *Taabi'een* differed with regards wearing shoes in *salaah*, is it *mustahab*, *mubaah* or *makrooh*. The preferred opinion is that there is no difference between wearing and removing them as long as there is no definite or suspected *najaasah* on them."³

Muhammad Karolia
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Jaami'ah Mahmoodiah
Persida, Springs

² *Umdat-ul-Qaari* (V.4 Pg.119)

³ All the contents of this article were condensed from the *Maqaalaat* (Pg.137-141) of Shaikh Muhammad Zahid Al-Kawthari (ra) unless otherwise stated.