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Blog

The Condition of Pride in Isbal

By Hakim al-Umma Mawlana Ashraf 'Ali Thanawi

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Translated by Hamood Aleem

In regards to wearing trousers ... below the ankles (*isbal*) ... it is mentioned in a *hadith* in *Sahih al-Bukhari* and *Sahih Muslim* that the Messenger of Allah (Allah bless him and give him peace) said that [on the day of judgment] Allah Most High will not look with mercy towards the person who lowers his *izar* (lower garment) with pride.¹ The limit of this lowering [of one's lower garment below the ankles] is mentioned in a second *hadith* in which the Messenger of Allah (Allah bless him and give him peace) said that [the portion of] the lower garment that is below the ankles is in hellfire. This *hadith* has been related by al-Bukhari.²

A third *hadith* mentions the prohibition of this [act] in other types of garments as well. The Messenger of Allah (Allah bless him and give him peace) said that *isbal* (lengthening and exceeding the limit) is also in trousers, shirt and turban. Whoever lengthens any of these garments with pride, Allah Most High will not look with mercy towards him on the Day of Judgment. Abu Dawud, al-Nasai and Ibn Maja have related this *hadith*.³ This *hadith* is corroborated by another *hadith* in which it is mentioned that whoever lengthens his clothes with pride, Allah Most High will not look with mercy towards this person on the Day of Judgment. This *hadith* has been related by al-Bukhari and Muslim.⁴ The Prophet (Allah bless him and give him peace) mentioned clothes in this *hadith* in an absolute manner in which all [types of] clothes are included. The limit of lengthening trousers has been mentioned in the *hadith* and the limit in other garments, as mentioned by scholars, is lengthening the sleeve beyond the fingers [in shirts] and lowering half of the turban's end (or tail) below the waist. All of these [types of] *isbal* are prohibited.

Some awry-headed individuals say the prohibition mentioned in the *hadith* is for *isbal* that is done with pride and since we do not do it with pride, it is permissible for us. Firstly, it should be known that it is incorrect to say we do not do it with pride. So why do you do it? Why do you not adopt the Sunnah appearance? It is because adopting the Sunnah appearance this way causes distress. Why do you despise trousers above the ankles? If this is not pride, then what is?

Secondly, the condition of pride stated in the *hadith* is not necessarily a precluding condition (*qayd ihtirazi*),⁵ it is possible that it is an incidental condition (*qayd waqi'i*)⁶ because most

1 The Prophet (Allah bless him and give him peace) said: "Allah will not look on the Day of Resurrection at a person who trails his *izar* out of pride." (*al-Bukhari* and *Muslim*)

2 The Prophet (Allah bless him and give him peace) said: "Whatever of the *izar* (lower garment) hangs down below the ankles is in the Fire." (*al-Bukhari*)

3 The Prophet (Allah bless him and give him peace) said: "*Isbal* may apply to the lower garment, shirt or turban. Whoever lets any part of them hang down in order to show off, Allah will not look at him on the Day of Resurrection." (*Abu Dawud*, *al-Nasa'i* and *Ibn Majah*)

4 The Prophet (Allah bless him and give him peace) said: "Whoever trails his garment out of pride, Allah will not look at him on the Day of Resurrection." (*al-Bukhari* and *Muslim*)

5 See footnote no. 6

6 A precluding condition, or *qayd ihtirazi*, is a condition mentioned with the express purpose of excluding something. When the *hadith* says that the one who drags his trousers with pride will be punished, if the condition is assumed to be *ihtirazi* then the sin is only when one does *isbal* with pride, hence it would be said the condition made *ihtirazi*, or excluded, the situation of when it was practiced without pride. But this is not

people do *isbal* with the intention of pride. It is because of this that the Prophet (Allah bless him and give him peace) stated this condition; it (*isbal*) is prohibited without pride anyway. Furthermore, it is mentioned in the second *hadith* at the beginning of this article that the ankles are the limit. The condition of pride has not been mentioned in this *hadith*, rather the statement of the Prophet (Allah bless him and give him peace) is unconditional which proves that with or without the existence of pride, *isbal* is prohibited in all its forms.

Yes, [in *isbal* done] with pride, the addition of another sin of pride will make that sin more severe; this is a separate issue. Without pride only one sin will be left and it will certainly remain. There is no possibility of exemption and permissibility here. If one was to say that we consider this *mutlaq* (unrestricted) narration to be understood in the same manner as the *muqayyad* (restricted) narration, the answer to this is that this issue has been established in the *usuls* (principles) of Hanafi fiqh with proof (*dalil*) that the *mutlaq* always remains [unrestricted] in its application (*itlaq*)⁷. In short, there is no room for permissibility here.

(*Islah al-Rusum*, Section 8, Chapter 1, pg 28-30, Dar al-'Isha'at, Karachi)

the case here; the condition of pride here is actually an incidental condition or *qayd ittifaqi* (also known as *qayd waqi'i*) which is when something is mentioned in a manner resembling a condition when it is really not a condition, thus it does not exclude anything. If the condition of pride in the *hadith* is said to be a *qayd ittifaqi*, it means that its mention in the *hadith* was *ittifaqan* (by chance) therefore it does not play any part in the ruling. The ruling of prohibition would apply even if there is no pride. (Special thanks to Mufti Husain Kadodia for the explanation. Translator)

⁷ Hakim al-Umma Mawlana Ashraf 'Ali Thanawi has explained this *usul* in more detail in *Imdad al-Fatawa*. A translation of his *fatwa* on the issue is as follows: "In the discussion on qualifying a *mutlaq* into a *muqayyad* in a single *hukm* (ruling) in *Nur al-Anwar*, [it mentions that] 'the two narrations which have been reported in regards to *sadaqat al-fitr* are in its *sabab* (cause) [i.e. cause for the *wujub* of *sadaqat al-fitr*]. Since there is no competition between causes, it is compulsory to combine both narrations, i.e. what we have mentioned about the *mutlaq* being qualified into a *muqayyad* in a single occurrence and a single ruling is when both narrations differ in their ruling. However, if two narrations are reported in [differing] causes or conditions then there is no hindrance in it or contradiction between them, therefore it is possible that the *mutlaq* with its unrestricted application is one *sabab* and *muqayyad* with its restriction is another *sabab*.' (*Nur al-Anwar* p. 158)

"The ruling is of sin in that which we are discussing (i.e. *isbal*). The *mutlaq* narration of lowering [one's garments below the ankles] and the *mutlaq* narration of lowering with *khuyala'* (pride) are both causes for this ruling. In this case there is no reason for the *mutlaq* to be qualified into the *muqayyad*, hence lowering with or without pride would be considered *haram* -- although if some dissimilarity was acknowledged in both prohibitions then there is room because in one place one prohibited act will be perpetrated, i.e. lowering garments below one's ankles, and in another place two prohibited acts will be perpetrated, i.e. lowering garments below one's ankles and pride. To say that the prohibition of this act is due to the custom of the Arabs who used to do this with pride is baseless because a specific (*khass*) text does not necessitate a specific ruling when the wording is general ('*amm*')." (*Imdad al-Fatawa*, Question. 114, vol. 4, p. 121-122, Maktaba Dar al-'Ulum Karachi)