

# Cleanliness in Islam

**I**slam, as we learn from the Qur'an and Hadith, is a religion of nature. Islam and nature being indeed each other's counterparts. Nature loves cleanliness and abhors pollution: that is why this highly desirable feature of human existence — cleanliness — is one of the basic tenets of the Islamic faith.

What is the nature of that faith? It is to lead a life in total consonance with the will of God. And such a life can have its beginnings only in a condition of exemplary personal hygiene.

According to a *hadith*, the *keeping of one-self clean is one half of faith*; this indicates the amount of emphasis laid upon hygiene in Islamic practice. The cleanliness factor is thus a major segment of the very essence of Islam.

This is clearly in evidence at the appointed times of worship — the most sublime form of worship being *salat (namaz)* which is engaged in five times a day. Each time the hour of prayer arrives the first thing the good Muslim must do is perform his ablution. Ablution (*wudu*) entails the washing of all the exposed parts of the body. As a cleansing process, *wudu* is the equivalent of a half bath. In this way, the devout Muslim takes a half bath five times daily.

In the first phase of Islam, it was common practice for Muslims to take a bath daily before the *fajr* (dawn) prayers. Bathing, thus, became a regular daily feature of every Muslim's life.

The servant of Uthman, the third Caliph, tells of how the Caliph used unfailingly to take a bath once or twice daily. If Muslims have always attached great importance to cleanliness, it is because of the explicit commands on this subject in the Qur'an.

When the Qur'an began to be revealed, one of its signal injunctions was: "Cleanse your garments and keep away from all pollution(74:4)."

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## Horizons



*Wahiduddin Khan*

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In the realm of spiritual development, one of the principal elements is purification through penitence. As the Qur'an says; "God loves those who turn to Him in repentance and purify themselves (2:222)."

Just as repentance frees body and soul of worldly moral dress, so does water remove impurities from body and clothing. Islam, accordingly, exhorts others to turn in remembrance to God, thus purifying his soul.

The Mosque, the focal point of Islamic life, is called in a *hadith* the "home of the pious people."

As the Qur'an puts it : "There you shall find men who would keep pure. God loves those who purify themselves (9:108). We are asked, therefore, to clean the mosque, ridding it of noise and dust, just as Abraham and Ishmael have enjoined "to cleans Our House (the Kabah) for those who walk around it, who meditate in it, and who kneel and prostrate themselves (2:125)."

Following the examples of the sanitising of the mosque, Muslims are urged to keep their bodies pure by ablution and bathing, their clothes clean by regular washing and their houses and their surrounding spotless.

These practices are incumbent upon every Muslim.

According to a *hadith*, the Prophet Muhammad said, "God is pure and loves purity," which means that cleanliness and purity are on the highest scale of cardinal virtues. What God loves is undoubtedly of supreme value.

Every Muslim must, in consequence, lead a Life marked by its cleanliness and purity in order to earn the approval of his Creator.