

'Ā'ishah narrated that God's Messenger (peace be upon him) said:

- 1 Ten practices are [aspects of] sound human nature:
- 2 trimming one's moustache,
- 3 leaving one's beard,
- 4 brushing teeth,
- 5 inhaling water,
- 6 clipping nails,
- 7 washing finger joints,
- 8 plucking armpit hair,
- 9 shaving pubic hair
- 10 And reducing water.
- 11 Muṣ'ab said: 'I have forgotten the tenth, but perhaps it is rinsing one's mouth'.⁽¹⁾

1 Related by Muslim, 261.

From the Qur'an

- ﴿God loves those who turn to Him in repentance, and He loves those who keep themselves pure.﴾ (2: 222)
- ﴿Children of Adam, dress well when you attend any place of worship.﴾ (7: 31)
- ﴿Set your face steadily towards the true faith, turning away from all that is false, in accordance with the natural disposition which God has installed into man. Nothing can change God's creation. Such is the ever-true faith; but most people do not know it.﴾ (30: 30)
- ﴿It is God who has moulded you into a comely shape.﴾ (40: 64)

The Narrator

Mother of the Believers, 'Ā'ishah bint Abu Bakr 'Abdullāh ibn Abu Quḥāfah 'Uthmān ibn 'Āmir belonged to the Taym branch of the tribe of Quraysh. She was pure and her innocence was revealed from on high. She was the Prophet's beloved wife and was the leading female scholar of the Muslim nation. Her mother was Umm Rūmān bint 'Āmir. The Prophet married her sometime after his first wife, Khadījah, had passed away. She was the only one of the Prophet's wives who was a virgin on her marriage. All his other wives had previous marriages. He loved her more than any other woman. No other woman in the Muslim nation, or indeed among all women achieved a higher status as a scholar. According to authentic reports, she died in Madinah in Year 57 AH, 677 CE, aged 66.

Summary

The Prophet (peace be upon him) mentions in this hadith some of the practices that are associated with sound nature God has given to mankind, so that they will be in the best form and shape. The hadith mentions ten of these, namely, trimming one's moustache, growing one's beard, brushing teeth, inhaling water and blowing one's nose, clipping nails, washing finger joints, plucking armpit hair, shaving pubic hair, washing one's genitals and rinsing one's mouth.



Message and Meaning

1

Islam takes care of all human internal and external affairs. Therefore, it ensures that a Muslim should maintain a decent appearance. In this hadith, the Prophet (peace be upon him) mentions some of the sound practices of human nature, which God made it natural for people to look after, so that they have a decent and comely appearance. These are approved by sound mind. However, some people may take a different line and corrupt their natural tendencies. The Prophet (peace be upon him) said: 'Every child is born with the true nature. Its parents then make it a Jew, Christian or Magian'.⁽¹⁾

However, the good practices of sound human nature are not limited to the ten mentioned in this hadith. Others are mentioned in other hadiths.

2

The first of these practices is trimming one's moustache. This should be trimmed because if it is overgrown, it may cause some harm through what is discharged through one's nose. It also interferes with drinking.

Trimming the moustache is recommended, i.e. a sunnah. It is preferable to trim it back so as one's lip is clearly visible. It is not recommended to shave it altogether.

3

The second practice is to leave one's beard, which is a man's facial hair. What is meant is that it should be left and allowed to grow properly.

Several hadiths use different Arabic words which together indicate an order to leave it to grow and that it is not permissible to shave it. As for trimming it somewhat, this is subject to different scholarly views.

4

Brushing one's teeth is the third practice. During the Prophet's lifetime and for many succeeding generations, this was with the use of a stick from the *arāk* tree. It was useful to clean and brush one's teeth and impart a healthy mouth smell.

The use of such a toothstick is recommended at all times, particularly before prayers and on waking up. It is also recommended to remove bad mouth smells and when one's teeth change colour. The Prophet (peace be upon him) said: 'The use of a toothstick cleanses the mouth and pleases the Lord'.⁽²⁾

5

The fourth practice is inhaling water to blow one's nose and remove mucous.

6

Clipping one's nails is the fifth practice. A person should regularly clip one's nails in order not to leave any deposit of dirt under them.

1 Related by al-Bukhari, 1385; Muslim, 2658.

2 Related by al-Nasā'ī, 5.

7

The next practice is the washing of finger joints, because they may hold deposits of dirt, impurity or germs. This practice applies to all areas of the body which may gather dirt or germs. It is important to keep them clean.

8

The seventh practice is to remove armpit hair, because this is a point which gathers dirt and sweat, giving off a noxious smell.

This recommendation is fulfilled however the hair is removed, whether the area is shaved or the hair plucked. The important thing is to remove armpit hair. If one can pluck it, rather than shave it, this is better.

9

The eighth practice is shaving pubic hair. This applies to both men and women.

10

The ninth practice is expressed as 'reducing water', but it refers to the use of water to cleanse oneself after urination and defecation. It is also suggested that it means that a person sprinkles some water over one's penis and clothing to remove any thought that some drops of urine might have fallen on one's clothes.

11

One of the narrators forgot the tenth practice, and thought that most probably it was rinsing one's mouth.

Some scholars say that the tenth is circumcision, because it is mentioned in the hadith narrated by Abu Hurayrah quoting the Prophet: 'Sound human nature includes five (or five practices are aspects of sound human nature): circumcision, shaving pubic hair, clipping one's nails, plucking armpit hair and trimming one's moustache'.⁽¹⁾

Circumcision is a duty for boys, except in a case where it causes some harm. It involves cutting the foreskin that covers the top of the penis. If the foreskin is left uncut, it gathers traces of urine and impurity. No circumcision applies to women.⁽²⁾

It should be noted that for trimming the moustache, clipping the nails, removing armpit hair and shaving pubic hair, the proper thing is to do it as necessary, whenever it has grown. It is not recommended to wait for forty days. Anas ibn Mālik said: 'We have been instructed not to exceed forty nights in attending to trimming moustaches, clipping nails, plucking armpit hair and shaving pubic hair.'⁽³⁾

1 Related by al-Bukhari, 5889; Muslim, 257.

2 Ibn 'Uthaymīn, *Sharḥ Riyāḍ al-Ṣāliḥīn*, Vol. 5, p. 229.

3 Related by Muslim, 258.

Implementation

1

Islam gives much attention to people's internal and external cleansing, taking care that a Muslim should have the best appearance. God says: 'God loves those who turn to Him in repentance, and He loves those who keep themselves pure'. (2: 222) The Prophet (peace be upon him) says: 'Cleansing is half the faith'. Therefore, a Muslim should always make sure of cleansing his body and having good appearance. Needless to say, he must also make sure of the purity of his faith and heart.

2

God requires that when His servants stand before Him in worship they must be fully cleansed, with body and clothing clean, ready to address Him, pure internally by repenting their sins and cleansed externally by performing the ablutions and putting on clean clothes. Hence, when we perform the ablution, we say: 'My Lord, make me one of those who repent their sins and those who cleanse themselves'.

3

It is recommended that men should follow the Prophet's Sunnah, trimming their moustaches. When they do, they are recommended to start with the right side.

4

It is not permissible for a man to shorten or shave his beard. What is permissible is to keep it tidy.

5

Scholars mention that certain practices are discouraged to do with one's beard. These include dying it black except at the time of jihad, dying it yellow to give oneself an appearance of ascetism, whitening it to give an impression of being old, wise or scholarly, shaving or plucking it, plucking the white hairs, combing it to attract women, or leaving it uncombed, dishevelled to give an appearance of carelessness about oneself.

6

It is recommended to use a toothstick to clean one's mouth and remove any bad smell. Using a toothbrush and tooth paste is a proper alternative.

7

It is recommended to use a toothstick before every prayer, to implement the hadith quoting the Prophet: 'Were it not that I may be setting the believers – in Zuhayr's narration "setting my community" – a task that is too hard, I would have commanded them to brush their teeth at the time of every prayer'.⁽¹⁾

8

Using a toothstick is not discouraged at any time. It is indeed encouraged when one is fasting. 'Āmir ibn Rabī'ah narrated: 'I saw the Prophet (peace be upon him) countless times using a toothstick while fasting'.⁽²⁾

1 Related by al-Bukhari, 887; Muslim, 252.

2 Related by al-Tirmidhī, 725.

9

Inhaling water is an act of cleansing one's nose. Therefore, the Prophet ordered a person performing the ablution: 'Inhale water very well unless you are fasting'.⁽¹⁾

10

Every Muslim should take care of his nails, clipping them and removing any dirt underneath them.

11

The Prophet mentions washing finger joints, but this includes every part of the body that could attract dirt, such as the back of the ear, wrinkles, in between one's toes and any spot where sweat and dust gather.

12

It is recommended that one should remove pubic hair regularly, wash hairy areas, clean the area at the top of one's thighs and ensure that every part of one's body is washed.

13

The use of water to wash the genitals after a discharge is much better than using solid objects such as toilet paper on its own. Washing with water ensures proper cleansing.

14

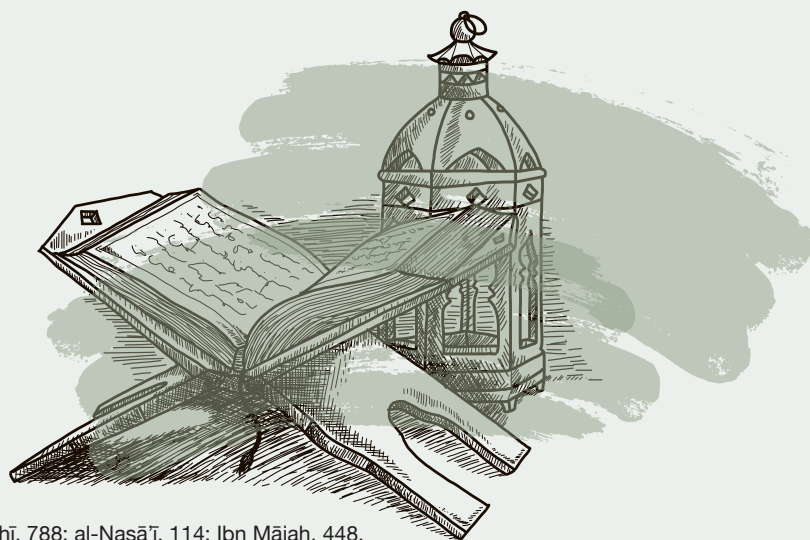
A Muslim must not be prevented by pride from stating the truth. We note that the narrator clearly states that he forgot the tenth practice. This is the proper attitude which is much better than saying what may be wrong, attributing it to God or His Messenger.

15

Rinsing one's mouth is a natural practice which a Muslim should do frequently. By doing so, he pleases God, gains the reward of following the Sunnah and makes his cleansing complete.

16

It is much better that circumcision should be done as early as possible. It is better done in early childhood, because it is the time when flesh grows quicker. Moreover, in early childhood, the child does not go through psychological pain.



1 Related by Abu Dāwūd, 142; al-Tirmidhī, 788; al-Nasā'ī, 114; Ibn Mājah, 448.

