

204777 - Ruling on doing wudu and ghusl with water into which some impurity has fallen

the question

I want to ask about the ruling on the water of the main channel in the middle of Pakistan, in the city of Lahore: is it pure or not? Is it valid to do ghusl and wudu using its water? There are some drainage channels that feed into this channel, and many dead animals can be seen in it, such as cattle and horses, and the colour of the water from this channel is not clear. Is it pure?

Detailed answer

The scholars are agreed that if some impurity falls into water and its colour, taste or smell change as a result, then it is impure and it is not permissible to use it for ghusl or wudu.

They are also agreed that if impurity falls into a large amount of water but it does not change it, then it is pure and it is valid to use it for wudu and ghusl.

Ibn al-Mundhir (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

The scholars are agreed that if impurity falls into a small or large amount of water, and the impurity changes the taste, colour or smell of the water, then the water is impure so long as it is like that, and it is not valid to use it for wudu or ghusl.

And they are agreed that if impurity falls into a large body of water, such as a bay or gulf and the like, but it does not change in colour, taste or smell, then the water remains pure, as it was before the impurity fell into it. (*Al-Awsat*, 1/368).

Shaykh `Abd ar-Rahman as-Sa`di (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

That is because the scholars (may Allah have mercy on them) are agreed regarding two types of water.

They are agreed that any water that is changed by impurity becomes impure.

And they are also agreed that the basic principle regarding all water that falls from the sky or springs forth from the earth, whether it is flowing or stagnant, is pure and a means of purification. (*Irshad Uli al-Basa'ir wa'l-Albab*, p. 14).

It says in *Fatawa al-Lajnah ad-Da'imah*, Vol. 1, 5/84:

The basic principle regarding water is that it is pure, but if its colour, taste or smell is changed by any impurity, then it becomes impure, whether its amount is small or large. But if the impurity does not change it, then it may be used for purification. End quote.

The evidence that water is a means of purification, even if some impurity falls into it, so long as it is not changed by that impurity, is the report narrated by at-Tirmidhi from Abu Sa'id al-Khudri (may Allah be pleased with him), who said: It was said: O Messenger of Allah, can we do wudu using water from the well of Buda'ah? It is a well into which are thrown menstrual rags, the flesh of dogs and rotten things. The Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said: "Indeed water is pure and nothing makes it impure." Classed as authentic by al-Albani in *Sunan at-Tirmidhi*.

Ibn al-Qayyim (may Allah have mercy on him) said in his *Hashiyah 'ala as-Sunan* (1/86):

His doing wudu with water from the well of Buda'ah, even though it was as they described it to him, indicates that water is not made impure if something impure falls into it, so long as it does not change. End quote.

Shaykh al-Islam Ibn Taymiyah (may Allah have mercy on him) was asked about a well into which a hen fell then died: had the water become impure or not?

He replied: If the water did not change, then it did not become impure. (*Majmu` al-Fatawa*, 21/39).

But those dead animals and drainage channels may affect water nearby, and make it impure. As for water that is far away from them, it will not be changed by that, so it is pure. See: *Al-Majmu`* by an-Nawawi, 1/195.

Based on that, you should examine the water of this channel. If any trace of impurity – such as taste, colour or smell – is detected because of those drainage channels and streams that feed into it, or dead animals that are thrown into it, then the water is deemed to be impure in that case, and based on that, it is not permissible to do wudu or ghusl with water from that channel.

But if no traces of impurity appear in it, then it is pure and it is permissible to use it for wudu and ghusl.

It does not matter if the water is not clear, or is somewhat changed, so long as that change is not because of impurities that fell into the water. The colour of water may change due to being stagnant and remaining there for a long time, or because it is not used much.

And Allah knows best.