

What is cleanliness?

[Religion](#), [Islam](#)



What is Cleanliness? Since the germ theory of disease, cleanliness has come to mean an effort to remove germs and other hazardous materials. A reaction to an excessive desire for a germ-free environment began to occur around 1989, when David Strachan put forth the "hygiene hypothesis" in the British Medical Journal. In essence, this hypothesis holds that dirt plays a useful role in developing the immune system; the fewer germs people are exposed to in childhood, the more likely they are to get sick as adults. The valuation of cleanliness, therefore, has a social and cultural dimension beyond the requirements of hygiene for practical purposes. Influence of cleanliness on an individual's life The significance of cleanliness and hygiene cannot be overlooked by any society. Every faith and civilization stresses the importance of cleanliness. Historically, cleanliness has been considered one of the important factors by which to judge a civilization's or society's development. Islam places great emphasis on cleanliness and purity, both physically and spiritually. In Islam, spiritual purity is linked to physical cleanliness and purity. More importantly, cleanliness is termed an indispensable fundamental of faith. However, this fundamental and powerful tenet of our faith, unfortunately, is not reflected in our society practically. Serious reflection is required on our individual as well as collective practices in order to make this valuable principle of Islam part of our lives. There are many verses in the Holy Quran which reflect the importance of cleanliness. For example, Allah says "...Truly, Allah loves those who turn to Him constantly and He loves those who keep themselves pure and clean" (2: 222). In the Quran worship and seeking Allah's love is conditioned with cleanliness and purity as the Holy Book says "...In it [mosque] are men who

love to clean and to purify themselves. And Allah loves those who make themselves clean and pure" (9: 108). Furthermore, in one of his sayings the Holy Prophet (PBUH) has termed cleanliness as half of faith. The above few examples from the Holy Quran and sayings of the Holy Prophet reveal that without cleanliness of our body and environment, one cannot receive the proximity of Allah spiritually and most importantly, faith cannot be completed in the absence of cleanliness and purity. Much is said rhetorically about cleanliness in our society but practically its application is missing. A quick observation can reveal how insensitive a culture we have developed regarding cleanliness and hygiene. Throwing garbage in the streets, roads or parks has become a common practice in our society. In public places dustbins are seldom found. Even if dustbins are installed, people do not use them properly. Rather, they prefer to throw garbage outside them. It is also observed that people clean their homes and shops and throw the garbage on the street without considering its implications. It is evident that even students of elite schools throw garbage on the ground even in the presence of garbage bins. This shows our attitude towards cleanliness and hygiene. Another habit that is commonly found in our society is spitting openly. People spit paan from running vehicles without considering the pedestrians walking on the road. This practice not only affects the environment but is also an eyesore. Another area that needs consideration is the horrible condition of public toilets. The shortage of public toilets is a big challenge, hence people are compelled to use open spaces to answer the call of nature. The toilets that do exist are in such pathetic condition that one cannot use them. There are many other examples which can be cited to indicate the

pathetic condition of cleanliness and hygiene in our society. Hence, conscious efforts are needed to tackle this issue. There is a dire need to educate and sensitise people about the importance of cleanliness in light of our faith. In this regard social institutions such as educational institutions, the media and religious institutions can play a vital role. It is essential to provide civic education in order to train the younger generations of a society. In Pakistan, the education system needs to transform its practices. Teaching and learning material regarding cleanliness and hygiene should be included in the curriculum and textbooks. Educational institutions should demonstrate cleanliness in their premises. To train young people schools should involve students in cleaning their schools, homes and environment and highlight proper sanitary practices. The use of dustbins should be strictly followed in the school premises. Secondly, the media can be a powerful source to educate and sensitise the masses about the importance of cleanliness and disadvantages of an unhygienic way of life. It should focus on both the good as well as unhygienic practices in our society. Thirdly, religious institutions such as mosques and madressahs can also play their part in educating the people about the importance of cleanliness in the light of Islamic teachings. Furthermore, the role and commitment of the government cannot be overlooked in maintaining cleanliness and hygiene in society. The government's will is very crucial in making policies and implementing them at the grass-roots level. The government can play an important role in cleaning areas, installing dustbins, collecting garbage and enforcing laws against littering etc. The importance of cleanliness cannot be ignored in individual as well as communal life. On one hand it is an important factor for

human health and spiritual development; on the other hand it is essential for environmental development. By adopting a clean and hygienic lifestyle, a valuable amount can also be saved where health issues are concerned. A clean and healthy life helps in refining the culture of a society and reflects in every aspect of life such as art, architecture, food, music and so on.

Ultimately, it leads towards a higher level of civilization. Islam has put unique emphasis on the importance of cleanliness by making it a part of faith.

Hence, there is a dire need to make conscious efforts in educating the people about the importance of cleanliness. In this regard, serious steps are required at multiple levels to make this precious value of our faith part of our individual and collective lives.