

Is Masah on all types of Socks and Shoes Permissible?

Ibn Taymiyyah, Ibn Qayyim, Ibn Hazm, Maududi have stated Masah on All types of Socks is Permissible. What does Islamic Shariah say regarding this?

The following is an extract from "Fihi Maqalat" Volume 2 page 9-24 by Mufti Taqi Uthmani regarding masah (wiping) of socks for wudhu (ablution).

Note: The fatwa below is very loosely translated from the Urdu language and Arabic in certain places. May Allah (swt) forgive me if I made any errors in the translation.

Question

On what types of socks is Masah permissible? What do 'Ulema of Islam say regarding this?

a) As far as masah on leather socks is concerned, in this matter the opinion of permissibility is almost unanimous.

However, there is some difference regarding masah on socks made out of wool, cotton, nylon etc. Some put conditions to the permissibility of masah on such socks. One famous personality of present times says that masah on socks of all types is permissible without any restrictions.

b) Below is what this famous personality says regarding the conditions which fuqaha (jurists) have placed on the permissibility of masah on such socks:

"I have tried to find the basis for such conditions but I could not find anything in the Sunnah. From Sunnah it is established that the prophet Muhammad (saw) did masah on socks and shoes. Apart from Nasai, Book of Sunan and Musnad Ahmed relate from Mugheera Ibn Sha'bah that prophet Muhammad (saw) performed wudhu (ablution) and did masah on his socks and shoes (masah 'ala al-jurbain wa al-na'layn). Abu Dawood says that Ali (ra), Abdullah ibn Mas'ud (ra), Bara' ibn 'azab (ra), Anas ibn Malik (ra), Abu Amamah (ra), Suhail bin Sa'd (ra) and 'Umar bin Harith (ra) all did masah on socks and this act is also related from 'Umar (ra) and 'Abbas (ra). Furthermore Baihaqi relates from Ibn 'Abbas (ra) and Anas bin Malik (ra) and Tahawi relates from Ovais ibn Aus that prophet Muhammad (saw) performed masah only on his shoes. There is no mention of socks in these narrations and the same act is narrated by 'Ali (ra). These narrations prove that not only is masah on socks permissible but masah on shoes worn on socks is also permissible. None of these narrations mention the prophet Muhammad (saw) had put conditions on performing masah like fuqaha have put conditions. Moreover none of these narrations mention the material out of which the socks were made on which the prophet Muhammad (saw) and Sahabah (Companions) did masah.

Because of this I am compelled to say that there is no basis for the conditions which the fuqaha have put on masah of socks and thus if anyone does not follow their conditions then he will not be sinful. The summary of this research

is that masah can be done on all forms of socks whether they are made of wool, cotton, nylon or of some other material, leather or oilcloth. In fact if cloth is wrapped around the feet then masah on it is also permissible.”

Apart from him, Allama Ibn Taymiyyah has also given the same fatwa in volume 2 of his fatawa book. Hafiz ibn Qayyim and Allama Ibn Hazm have the same ruling that masah can be performed on any type of socks without any restriction.

Answer

No Imams, Mujtahideen have regarded it permissible to do masah on the type of wollen, cotton and nylon socks that are available today. You have understood it incorrectly that there is a difference of opinion regarding this matter. In fact the opinion of impermissibility is unanimous regarding such thin socks. This is what Malik al ‘Ulema Kasani (ra) writes:

“So if socks are so thin that water can be strained through them then as per ijma masah on them is impermissible.” (Bada’i al-sana’i vol.1 page 10)

‘Allama Ibn Najeem (ra) writes:

ولا يجوز المسح على الجورب الرقيق من غزل او شعر بلا خلاف ولو كان ثخيناً
يمشى معه فرسخاً فضا عدا فعلى الخلاف

“It is not permissible to do masah on a sock made out of hair Ghazl (i.e. cotton, wool etc) and that is without any disagreement among the ‘ulema. If the sock is thick and it is possible to walk with it about 3 miles, then there is a disagreement.” (al-Jar al-Raiq Vol.1 pg 192)

This shows that the socks which do not have to condition of “thakheen” (ثخين) i.e. water can be strained through them or they need to be tied because they cant stay upright because of their thickness or one cant walk a mile in them without shoes then masah on them is not permissible in the madhhab of any mujtahid. Yes, the socks which fulfill all these three conditions, there is a difference of opinion regarding masah on them.

As far as Syed Abu al-‘ala Maududi is concerned, he has taken a different path from the majority and this matter is one such place where he adopted an opinion different from the majority fuqaha. This is a serious mistake on his part. The arguments of Maududi which you have presented show that he did not try to understand the reality of this matter in its entirety. For your satisfaction the gist of the matter is explained hereunder.

The Qur’an in Surah Maidah has defined a method to do wudhu which includes the command to wash your feet and not to do masah on them. Hence, according to the Qur’an, feet are to be washed whenever wudhu is performed and masah would be impermissible in any situation even if a person is wearing leather socks. But the permissibility to do masah on leather socks is given so that masah is done on such socks and this permission has been given by the prophet Muhammad (saw) in tawatir manner and is undeniable.

If masah on leather socks was mentioned in only 2 or 3 ahadith then the permissibility of masah would not have been given because no alteration can be

made in the order of the Qur'an based on khabar ahad. But because the ahadith of masah on leather socks are mutawatir, that is why in light of these mutawatir ahadith it has become the ijma of entire ummah that the verse of the Qur'an is special to the case when a person is not wearing leather socks.

Hence Imam Abu Hanifa (rh) states:

"I was not convinced about masah on leather socks till the time I did not have evidence for it which was as clear as the sunlight in the day." (al-Jara al-Ra'iq Vol.1 pg 731)

80 Companions (ra) have related the order of masah on leather socks. Ibn Hajar (rh), in Fath al-Bari Vol.1 pg 176 writes:

"A large group of huffaz have attested that the order of masah is mutawatir and some collected the sahabah (ra) who narrated these traditions and the number of sahabah was more than 80 including 'ashara mubashara.

And Hasan Basri says:

"If the issue of masah on leather socks was not proven through tawatir or excess narrations then there would have been no place for any alteration or extension of the Qur'anic order to wash feet." (Talkhees al-Jabeer Vol.1 pg 158; Bada'i Vol.1 pg 7)

Hence Imam Abu Yusuf (rh) states:

"Qur'anic order can only be abrogated by Sunnah of the Prophet (saw) only when it is proven by tawatir like in the case of masah on leather socks" (Ahkam al-Qur'an lil Jassas Vol.2 pg 425)

The summary is that the order of the Qur'an is not something which can be limited to certain conditions based on 2 or 3 ahadith. For this to be done it should be proven by tawatir like the issue of masah on leather socks is proven in ahadith. Now as far as the issue of leather socks are concerned, it is established by tawatir the the prophet Muhammad (saw) did masah on leather socks and even told the companions (ra) to do it. But for socks made of other materials, no such tawatir is present. "Khufain" in Arabic language refers only to leather socks and socks made out of cloth cannot be called "Khuff". Thus this permissibility is only for leather socks. For other types of socks, the command by the Qur'an to wash the feet will be followed. However, if the material of the socks are so thick (Thakheen) that their characteristics are at par with leather socks, which means water cannot be strained through them and to keep them erect one does not need to tie them and one can walk a mile or two in them, then there is a difference of opinion among the fuqaha regarding this matter. Some have stated that because such socks come under the meaning of leather socks, hence masah on them should also be permissible. And some have stated that because only masah on leather socks is established by tawatir, hence masah on anything else is impermissible.

Now socks are therefore of three types as far as the issue of masah is concerned:

a) Leather socks which are called "Khufain"; masah is permissible on them unanimously.

b) Thin socks which are not of leather and neither are characteristics of leather are found in them, like the socks of cotton, wool and nylon that are available today, the ijma on them is that on these masah is not permissible.

This is because masah on them is not proven by such evidence, in light of which, the command of washing feet in the Qur'an can be left.

c) Those socks that are not of leather but their thickness give them characteristics of leather socks. There is difference of opinion regarding masah on them.

The gist of the entire matter is that those socks which are not made of leather, on them there is no difference in the mujtahideen regarding lack of reason for doing masah. And this is due to the fact that the command to wash feet in the Qur'an cannot be left unless proven by tawatir evidence like the reason to do masah on leather socks is proven. Hence the conditions which fuqaha have applied, on socks made out of material other than leather, are not due to their whims and desires but to determine whether such socks have the characteristics of leather socks and there has been a difference of opinion in this matter as well whether doing masah on socks that have passed the conditions is permissible or not.

After understanding the reality of the matter, now see those narrations in which masah on socks (jurbain) is mentioned. In the entire ocean of ahadith there are only a total of 3 ahadith. One is from Bilal (ra), one from Abu Musa Ash'ari (ra) and one from Mugheera bin Shu'ba (ra).

Hadith by Bilal (ra) is in Mun'ajam Sagheer Tabrani and the one by Abu Musa Ash'ari (ra) is in Ibn Majah and Baihaqi etc. Hafiz Zail'ee (rh), in Nasb al-Rayah Vol.1 pg 183-4, has proven both these ahadith to have da'eef (weak) sanad (chain of narrators).

Abud Dawood says regarding the hadith of Abu Musa Ash'ari (ra) ليس بالمتصل ولا بالقوى "It is not strong." (Bazal al-Majhood Vol.1 pg 96).

Hence both these ahadith are out of the discussion.

Now what remains is the hadith by Mugheera bin Shu'ba (ra). The issue of this hadith is that although Imam Tirmidhi (rh) has stated that it is hasan sahih, other prominent muhaditheen have strongly criticized this classification by Imam Tirmidhi (rh).

Imam Abu Dawood (rh) quotes the hadith and writes:

"Abdul Rahman bin Mahdi would not narrate this hadith because the famous ahadith from Mugheera are regarding masah on leather socks." (Bazal al-Majhood Vol.1 pg 96)

Imam Nasai in Sunan Kubra writes:

"Apart from Abu Qays, no one else has narrated this tradition and no other narrator supports this according to my knowledge. However the sahih narration from Mugheera is about masah on leather socks." (Nasb al-Rayah Vol.1 pg 183)

Other than this, Imam Muslim (rh), Imam Baihaqi (rh), Sufyan Thawri (rh), Imam Ahmed (rh), Yahya bin Mu'een (rh), Ali bin al-Madni (rh) and other muhaditheen have declared this hadith da'eef (weak) on basis of the weakness of Abu Qays and Huzayl bin Sharjeel.

Imam Nawawi (rh) in his sharh of Sahih Muslim writes:

"Those people who declared this hadith weak, if each one of them would have been alone, even then they would hold more weight over Imam Tirmidhi (rh). Moreover, the principle is that jarh is given preference to ta'deel and huffaz of Hadith are unanimous over the weakness of this hadith. Therefore, Tirmidhi's opinion that this hadith is hasan sahih, is not acceptable." (Nasb al-Rayah Vol.1 pg 183)

This is the value of the isnad of this hadith which Maududi has presented as evidence for his opinion. You saw that this hadith is da'eef and not acceptable to majority of huffaz of hadith.

Secondly, if for argument's sake, we accept the classification of Imam Tirmidhi (rh) and say that this hadith is hasan sahih, so in the entire ocean of ahadith this would be the one and only narration in which prophet Muhammad (saw) performed masah on socks.

Now how can we leave the clear command in the Qur'an to wash the feet because of this one solitary hadith which has been severely criticized by muhaditheen?

It has been seen that the matter of masah on leather socks was only established when the ahadith regarding it reached the level of tawatir and Imam Abu Yusuf states that if the issue of masah on leather socks was not proven by so many ahadith then there was no room to leave out the washing of feet as commanded by the Qur'an. The command of masah on socks is only mentioned in 3 ahadith. 2 of them have been unanimously declared da'eef and the third one is declared da'eef by the majority of muhaditheen. Only Imam Tirmidhi (rh) classified it as sahih. On the basis of such a narration, no restriction can be placed on a command by the Qur'an.

Thus Imam Abu Bakr Jassas (rh) says:

"The reality of the matter is the verse refers to washing the feet like stated earlier. Hence, if it was not proven through mutawatir ahadith of prophet Muhammad (saw) regarding masah of leather socks, then we would never have said that masah on leather socks is permissible.....and because masah on socks (made out of cloth) are not related in the same manner like the one regarding leather socks, thus here we have upheld the order in the Qur'anic verse to wash the feet." (Ahkam al-Qur'an lil Jassas Vol.2 pg 428)

Now the question remains that those Sahabah (ra) who performed masah on socks or permitted it, for what reason did they do this.

The answer is that the sahabah (ra) did not state anywhere that these socks were made of thin cloth material. And unless this is not stated anywhere then how can one prove the permissibility of doing masah on these socks?

The famous 'alim of ahl-e-hadith Allama Shams-ul-Haq Azeem Abadi writes:

"Socks are made of leather, wool, cotton and all of them are called 'socks'. And masah on any type of socks cannot be proven until it is not proven that prophet Muhammad (saw) did masah on wollen socks." ('Awn al-Ma'bood Vol.1 pg 62)

On the contrary it is proven that these people who did masah on socks, they were either made of leather or were like leather socks because of their thickness and they had the characteristics of leather socks.

This is why Ibn Abi Sheeba narrates:

“Sa’eed bin Museet (rh) and Hasan Basri (rh) said that masah on socks is permissible on the condition that they are very thick.” (Musaniif ibn Abi Sheeba Vol.1 pg 188)

It is to be noted that the words in the narration is Thawb Safeeq (ثوب صفيق) which means that cloth which is highly strong, durable and firm. For reference please check Qamoos and Mukhtaar al-Sahaah etc.

Hasan Basri (rh) and Sa’eed bin al-Museeb (rh) both were famous and prominent tab’een and they gave this fatwa after witnessing the act practiced by the sahabah (ra).

Hence, by the practice of these people and their fatwa, it is established that those socks which due to their thickness have similar characteristics of leather socks, masah on them is permissible. And to clarify this thickness of the socks, I have mentioned the 3 conditions: that water cannot be strained through them, they would stay erect due to their thickness and thus need not be tied, and third that one can walk a mile or two wearing them. Such socks fall under the same category of leather socks and based on this, as well as the actions of the sahabah (ra), the majority of the fuqaha have included them in the ruling of masah on leather socks.

Hence Allama Ibn al-Hamaam writes:

“There is not doubt the permissibility of masah on leather socks was established without qiyas and hence qiyas of anything else cannot be done on them except if they enter the meaning of leather socks and by Khufeen, such socks are meant which have covered the feet completely and it would be possible to continuously walk in them during travelling.” (Fath al-Qadeer Vol.1 pg 109)

So it is incorrect to state permissibility to do masah on any type of socks is established in hadith and thus the fuqaha who put conditions on them are wrong and did it just by themselves without any evidence. The reality of the matter is that the command to wash feet cannot be left unless it is proven through mutawatir ahadith. Because such ahadith were present in the case of leather socks, hence masah was allowed in its case. But regarding socks of any other material, no such hadith is present that can be unanimously declared sahih hence masah on them cannot be allowed except for those socks which fall under the same category of leather socks because of their characteristics. And because from the sahabah (ra) and tab’een, masah on such socks was established, hence majority of fuqaha permitted it and defined the 3 conditions which would prove something to fall under the same category as leather socks. Thus ijma of all mujtahideen is held.

As far as Ibn Hazm (rh) or Ibn Taymiyyah (rh) or Ibn Qayyim (rh) are concerned, their high status is in its place but they have taken positions contrary to the majority in many matters which the Ummah have rejected. Especially in this matter where they have provided no evidence for their ruling. Hence on the basis of an opinion from only these 3 people against the unanimous opinion from all others, the command of the Qur’an to wash the feet cannot be left out. And there is absolutely

no basis whatsoever on the "ijtihad" of wrapping cloth around feet and doing masah on them. Allegations are raised against fuqaha by some that they have no evidence for their stand even though you have witnessed the undeniable evidence in this reply. On the other hand these same people do their own "ijtihad" in which you can wrap your feet with a cloth for no reason and do masah on them. Is there any source for this to omit the command of the Qur'an to wash feet?

The extract which you presented of Maududi has the issue of masah on shoes also in it. So now the reality of that matter will be discussed in short here in the end. If socks are thick then there are fuqaha who agree to the legality of performing masah on them. However, masah on shoes is not permissible in any madhhab of the imams.

In Ma'ruf ul San Vol.1 pg 347 it is written:

"None of the imams agreed on the permissibility of doing masah on shoes."

The reason for this is that masah on shoes is proven by the prophet Muhammad (saw) at such a time when he (saw) was already in a state of wudhu but would do a new wudhu for a new salah. In such a condition, because he (saw) was already in a state of wudhu, he (saw) would do masah on shoes instead of washing his feet.

Thus there is a narration in Sahih Ibn Huzaima Vol.1 pg 100:

"Ali (ra) asked for a glass of water and did a concise wudhu and did masah on his shoes. He then said: 'Prophet Muhammad (saw) used to do wudhu just like this when the previous wudhu was intact and not invalidated.'"

After this clarification it is clear that there is no room for a person who is without wudhu to do masah on his shoes when doing wudhu.

Conclusion:

All fuqaha unanimously agree that masah on thin socks through which water can be strained, need to be tied to stay erect and cannot be used to walk a mile or two is not permissible and neither is masah on shoes permissible. And because the socks we have today are thin and they do not pass the 3 conditions stated, hence masah on them is not permissible under any condition. The person who does masah on them, then according to Imam Abu Hanifa, Imam Shafi'i, Imam Malik and Imam Ahmed, in fact according to any mujtahid, the wudhu of such a person will be invalid.

End of Fatwa