221753 - Using Things Made from the Skin of Animals

the question

What is the ruling on using things made from the skins of animals?

Summary of answer

1. There is nothing wrong with using things made from the skins of animals whose meat is permissible to eat. As for those things made from the skins of carnivores, it is not permissible to use them at all.
2. As for things made from the skins of animals whose meat is not permissible to eat, it is better not to use them, because there is a strong difference of scholarly opinion concerning that.

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

Animal skins are used to make many things, such as handbags, coats, shoes, belts, and so on.

“Artificial leather” – whether it is made from petroleum by-products or other materials – is permissible and is pure, because the basic principle regarding things is that they are pure and permissible.

Types of things made from the skins of animals

As for things that are made from the skins of animals, the ruling differs according to the animal from whose skin they are made.

There are several scenarios when it comes to animal skins:

- If the skin comes from an animal whose meat is permissible to eat, and it was slaughtered in

the manner prescribed in Islamic teachings, then this skin is pure according to scholarly consensus, because it was rendered pure by means of proper slaughter, such as the skins of camels, cattle, sheep, deer, rabbits and so on, regardless of whether the skin has been tanned or not.

Ibn Hazm (may Allah have mercy on him) said: “The scholars are unanimously agreed that the skin of animals whose meat is permissible to eat, if it is slaughtered in the prescribed manner, is pure and it is permissible to use it and sell it." (*Maratib Al-Ijma`* p. 23)

- If the skin comes from an animal whose meat is permissible to eat, but the animal was not slaughtered in the manner prescribed in Islamic teachings – rather it either died of natural causes or it was slaughtered, but in a way that is not prescribed in Islamic teachings, then in this case the skin is impure, because it is part of an animal that died of natural causes and the like, and such a dead animal is impure, and it can only be purified by means of tanning. Once it has been tanned, it becomes pure.

Tanning means: treating the skin with detergents and antiseptics to remove any stench, rottenness and moisture in it. For that purpose they used to use mimosa flava leaves, galls, shabb plants [a type of fragrant plant], and pomegranate skins…

In modern times, tanning is done in large factories using some chemical substances that cleanse the skin and this serves the same purpose. … Tanning may be done using anything that removes the stench and impurities from the skin.

All the skins that are used nowadays in handbags, clothing, shoes and so on have been tanned and cleansed of moisture and blood.

The fact that animal skins are purified by tanning is indicated by the report narrated by Muslim (366) from Abul Khayr, which states that he asked `Abdullah ibn `Abbas (may Allah be pleased with him): We live in the West (Al-Maghrib) and with us there are Berbers and Magians who bring us a ram that they have slaughtered, but we do not eat their meat. And they bring us skins in which they put fat. Ibn `Abbas said: We asked the Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of

Allah be upon him) about that and he said: “Its tanning is its purification.”

And Muslim (363) also narrated from Ibn `Abbas (may Allah be pleased with him) that he said: A sheep was given in charity to a freed slave woman of Maymunah, but it died. The Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) passed by it and said: “Why don`t you take its hide and tan it, and make use of it?” They said: It is dead, O Messenger of Allah (i.e., it died of natural causes and was not slaughtered properly). He said: “It is only haram to eat it.”

This indicates that the skin of an animal whose meat is permissible to eat [if it is slaughtered properly] that died of natural causes may be purified by tanning.

Ibn Battal (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

“This is the view of the majority of scholars and muftis. Ibn Al-Qassar stated that the latter is the view of Malik, and it is also the view of Abu Hanifah and Ash-Shafi`i." (*Sharh Sahih Al-Bukhari* 5/441)

- If it is the skin of a carnivore, such as the skin of a lion, tiger, leopard, wolf, bear, jackal or weasel, the skins of these animals are impure, regardless of whether they were slaughtered, died of natural causes, or were killed, because even if they are slaughtered in the proper manner, they do not become halal or permissible. Therefore they are impure in all circumstances.

The scholars differed as to whether tanning makes the skins of these animals pure or not.

Regardless of whether we say that the skins of these animals become pure through tanning or not, it is not permissible to use them in either case, because of the authentic texts which state that it is not allowed to use them.

This is indicated by the report which was narrated from Abu`l-Malih from his father, according to which the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) forbade using the skins of carnivores as furnishings. (Narrated by At-Tirmidhi (1771); classed as Sahih by An-Nawawi and Al-Albani)

Al-Miqdam ibn Ma`di Karib narrated that the Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) forbade wearing the skins of carnivores and riding on them [by placing them under saddles]. (Narrated by Abu Dawud (4131); classed as Sahih by al-Albani)

These hadiths indicate that it is not permissible to make use of the skins of carnivores at all.

At-Tirmidhi said: Some of these scholars among the Companions of the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) and others said that they regarded it as disliked (makruh) to use the skins of carnivores even if they have been tanned. This is the view of `Abdullah ibn Al-Mubarak, Ahmad and Ishaq, and they strictly forbade wearing them and praying in them." (*Sunan At-Tirmidhi* 1771)

One of the scholars said: “The prohibition on the skins of carnivores refers to using them before they are tanned.”

An-Nawawi (may Allah have mercy on him) said: “This is a weak view, because there is no point in singling out the skins of carnivores for mention in that case; rather that applies equally to all animal skins." (A*l-Majmu` Sharh Al-Muhadhdhab* 1/221)

The reason for the prohibition on using these skins is what that involves of pride and arrogance, and because it is resembling the tyrants, and because it is the clothing of those who live a life of luxury and extravagance.

Based on that, it is not permissible to use them, regardless of whether we say that the skins become pure through tanning or not.

- If it is the skin of a non-carnivorous animal whose meat is not permissible to eat, such as the skins of snakes , elephants, donkeys, monkeys, pigs and so on, the skins of these and similar animals are impure, regardless of whether they were slaughtered, died of natural causes, or were killed, because even if they are slaughtered in the proper manner, they do not become halal or permissible. Therefore they are impure in all circumstances.

But if these skins are tanned, do they become pure? There is a difference of opinion among the

scholars regarding this matter.

It was said that tanning purifies all kinds of skins, except the skins of dogs and pigs .

This view, as Ibn `Abd Al-Barr (may Allah have mercy on him) said, is the view of the majority of jurists among Ahl Ar-Ra'y [scholars who derive rulings on the basis of analogy] and ahl al-athar [scholars who base rulings on reports] in the Hijaz, Iraq and Syria." (*Al-Istidhkar* 5/295)

This view is also indicated by the words of the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him: "If the hide is tanned it has become pure" (narrated by Muslim (366)); and "Any hide that is tanned has become pure" (Narrated by At-Tirmidhi (1728); classed as sahih by Al-Bukhari and At-Tirmidhi)

The word ihab (translated here as hide) refers to the skin before it is tanned; it is a general word which refers to all kinds of animal skins.

Excluded from that are the skins of dogs and pigs , because they are both impure when alive, and if being alive – which is stronger than tanning in terms of purification – does not make them pure, then it is more appropriate to say that tanning does not make them pure.

"Tanning removes the cause of impurity, which is moisture and blood." (A*l-Mawsu`ah Al-Fiqhiyyah* 20/230).

Things made from the skin of dogs and pigs

Dogs and pigs are both impure in and of themselves, meaning that the entire animal with all its parts is impure whether it is alive or dead, so they are not impure because of any blood or moisture that there is in them – as in the case of any other dead animals. Therefore they cannot be purified." (A*l-Mawsu`ah Al-Fiqhiyyah* 20/230)

Ibn `Abd al-Barr (may Allah have mercy on him) said: "The words of the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him), "Any hide that has been tanned has become pure" include all types of animal skins, but the majority of the early generations were unanimously agreed that the skin of

a pig is not included in that." (*At-Tamhid* 4/178)

And he (may Allah have mercy on him) also said: “With regard to the words “Any hide that has been tanned has become pure”, they refer to all hides, which are all kinds of animal skins, because the wording is general in meaning, and does not refer to anything specific … This is the view of the majority of scholars and muftis, with the exception of the skin of a pig , which is not included in the general meaning of the words “Any hide that has been tanned has become pure”, because it is prohibited in and of itself, whether alive or dead, and its skin is like its flesh. Just as its flesh and skin cannot become pure even if it is slaughtered in the proper manner, tanning also cannot purify its hide." (*Al-Istidhkar* 5/305)

The second view is that tanning only purifies the skins of animals whose meat is permissible to eat. As for animals whose meat is not permissible to eat, the skins cannot be purified by tanning. This is the view of Al- Awza`i and it is one view that was narrated from Imam Ahmad. It is also the view favoured by Shaykh Al-Islam Ibn Taymiyah (may Allah have mercy on him) in one of his two views. (See: *Sharh Sahih Muslim* by An-Nawawi (4/54); *Al-Quru`* by Ibn Muflih (1/102); *Majmu` Al-Fatawa* by Ibn Taymiyah (21/95)

This view was also favoured by a number of contemporary scholars, such as Shaykh Muhammad Ibn Ibrahim, Shaykh Ibn Baz, and Shaykh Ibn `Uthaymin (may Allah have mercy on them all).

They quoted as evidence the hadith of Salamah ibn Al-Muhabbiq, according to which the Prophet of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him), during the Tabuk campaign, called for water that a woman had. She said: I have nothing except what is in a waterskin made from an animal that died of natural causes. He said: “Didn`t you tan it?” She said: Of course. He said: “Then tanning it is the same as slaughtering it.” (Narrated by At-Tirmidhi (4245); classed as Sahih by Ad-Daraqutni, An-Nawawi and Al-Albani)

Thus he likened tanning to slaughtering in the prescribed manner, and slaughtering in the prescribed manner is only done in the case of animals whose meat is permissible to eat." (*Al-Mughni* by Ibn Qudamah 1/94)

Things made from the skins of animals whose meat is not permissible to eat

As for making use of things that are made from the skins of animals whose meat is not permissible to eat, there are different scholarly views. Those scholars who think that tanning purifies the skin regard it as permissible to make use of these skins, whereas those who think that tanning does not purify the skins of animals whose meat is not permissible to eat do not regard it as permissible to make use of these skins, or to sit on them or use them in any way.

Shaykh Ibn `Uthaymin (may Allah have mercy on him) was asked: What is the guideline on using animal skins or leather; what is halal in that regard and what is haram?

He said: It is well known that the leather available in the market is animal skins that have been tanned, and according to many of the scholars, animal skins that have been tanned are pure, even if they come from an animal that is impure.

The correct view is that they are not pure if they come from animals that are impure, because that which is impure in and of itself cannot become pure, even if it is washed with the water of the entire sea.

However, if the skin came from an animal that is permissible to eat , but you do not know whether the animal was slaughtered in the proper manner or died in another way, then that should not concern you, because even if the skin came from an animal that died of natural causes and the like, or from an animal that was slaughtered in a manner other than that which is prescribed in Islamic teachings, then if it was tanned, it has become pure, like some kinds of fur coats, which are lined with leather made from the skins of young sheep. We say wear them, and there is no blame on you, even if we assume that they came from animals that died of natural causes and the like, or from animals that were slaughtered in a manner other than that which is prescribed in Islamic teachings, because if they have been tanned, they have become pure." (*Liqa' Al-Bab Al-Maftuh)*.

In conclusion, there is nothing wrong with using things made from the skins of animals whose

meat is permissible to eat. As for those which are made from the skins of carnivores, it is not permissible to use them at all.

As for that which is made from the skins of animals whose meat is not permissible to eat, it is better not to use them, because there is a strong difference of scholarly opinion concerning that.

Shaykh Ibn Baz (may Allah have mercy on him) said: “Undoubtedly it is permissible to use the tanned skins of dead animals that would have become permissible to eat if they had been slaughtered in the prescribed manner, such as camels, cattle and sheep, for all purposes, according to the most correct scholarly view.

As for the skins of pigs, dogs and other animals that do not become permissible to eat even if they are slaughtered properly, then there is a difference of scholarly opinion as to whether they can be purified through tanning. The most prudent option is to refrain from using them, acting in accordance with the words of the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him): “Whoever avoids dubious matters will have protected his faith and his honour” and “Leave that which makes you doubt for that which does not make you doubt.”" (*Majmu` Fatawa Ibn Baz* 6/354).

And Allah knows best.