128877 - When Should the Postpartum Woman Do Ghusl?

the question

My wife gave birth a week ago, and I want to ask about when the time comes for her to do Ghusl. There is a tradition which says that the woman should do Ghusl a certain number of days after giving birth – is this true? Does this tradition have anything to do with Islamic teachings?

Summary of answer

The postpartum woman should refrain from praying for 40 days unless her bleeding ends before, then she should do Ghusl and resume praying. If she sees any blood after 40 days, then most of the scholars say that she should not refrain from praying after forty days.

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

When a woman has given birth, the blood that comes out as a result of giving birth is called Nifas . When she is bleeding following childbirth, she should not pray or fast, and her husband should not have intercourse with her, until she becomes pure from her Nifas [i.e., the bleeding stops] or the postpartum period, which is forty days, ends, then she should do Ghusl .

At-Tirmidhi (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

“The scholars among the companions of the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him), the generation who came after the companions, and those who came after them unanimously agreed that the postpartum woman should refrain from praying for forty days, unless her bleeding ends before that [and she sees signs of becoming pure], then she should do Ghusl and resume praying. If she sees any blood after forty days, then most of the scholars say that she should not refrain from praying after forty days. This is the view of most of the jurists and it is the view of

Sufyan Ath-Thawri, Ibn Al-Mubarak, Ash-Shafi`i, Ahmad and Is-haq." (*Sunan At-Tirmidhi* 1/256)

The Permanent Committee for Ifta’ said:

“If the postpartum woman sees that her bleeding has ended before the end of forty days, she should do Ghusl and pray and fast , and her husband may have intercourse with her. If the bleeding continues for more than forty days, then she should regard herself as coming under the ruling on one who is pure [i.e., her Nifas has ended] because forty days is the maximum duration of Nifas according to the more sound of the two scholarly views, and the bleeding that occurs after forty days is irregular bleeding that comes under the ruling on Istihadah (irregular bleeding), unless it coincides with her normal menstrual period, in which case it is to be regarded as menses and she should refrain from praying and fasting, and it is haram for her husband to have intercourse with her." (*Fatawa Al-Lajnah Ad-Da’imah* 5/417)

Thus it is clear that the Ghusl which is prescribed for the postpartum woman should be done after the bleeding of Nifas ends. This Ghusl is obligatory.

If the tradition in some countries says that the postpartum woman should do Ghusl a few days after giving birth, the purpose of this Ghusl is to energise her and let her clean herself, and there is nothing wrong with that. But it does not have any impact on Islamic rulings having to do with prayer or having intercourse with her husband. The postpartum woman should not pray and her husband should not have intercourse with her until she becomes pure from Nifas [i.e., the bleeding stops], and she does Ghusl.

And Allah knows best.