# 347677 - It is not allowed for the worshipper to resist the urge to urinate or defecate; does that mean that it is prohibited (haram)?

**the question**

Does the fact that it is not allowed to resist the urge to urinate or defecate when praying mean that it is prohibited (haram) or disliked (makruh)? If it means that it is disliked, what is there in the text to indicate that when the apparent meaning suggests otherwise?

**Detailed answer**

Praise be to Allah.

It was narrated that `A'ishah (may Allah be pleased with her) said: I heard the Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) say: "There is no prayer when food is ready, or when one is resisting the urge to relieve oneself." Narrated by Muslim, 560.

The urge to relieve oneself means the urge to urinate or defecate.

The reason for this prohibition is that resisting these urges could lead to not doing the actions of prayer properly or focusing as one should, as is known to be what happens to the one who is suppressing those urges if he prays in that state. Hence the scholars included alongside the urge to urinate or defecate anything that may distract the worshipper and that he could be resisting, such as the urge to pass wind, vomit and so on.

Badr ad-Din al-`Ayni (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

The words "or when one is resisting the urge to relieve oneself" mean: and he should not pray when he is in that state, namely resisting the urge to urinate or defecate, because in that case one is distracted and not able to focus completely on worship.

(End quote from *Sharh Sunan Abi Dawud*, 1/247)

Ibn `Abd al-Barr (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

The scholars are unanimously agreed that if a person prays when food is served and he completes his prayer without omitting any of its obligatory parts, his prayer is valid, and the same applies if he prays when resisting the urge to urinate or defecate, and manages to offer his prayer properly.

This indicates that the reason why praying when food has already been served is disallowed is only so that the worshipper will not be distracted by the food, and thus not be able to focus in his prayer, and will not be praying in the required manner.

The same applies to suppressing the urge to urinate or defecate. Even though we do not think it is a good idea for someone to start praying when he is in that state, if he does that and offers his prayer properly, it is valid, but what he did is not good.

But a man knows himself best, and people are not all the same in that regard; an old man is not like a young man in this regard. And Allah knows best.

(End quote from *al-Istidhkar*, 6/206).

Based on this reason – which is resisting the urge to urinate or defecate, which may distract the worshipper from his prayer – the fact that it is disallowed means that it is prohibited (haram), if resisting this urge makes the person unable to do all the obligatory or essential parts of the prayer properly.

Ibn `Abd al-Barr (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

The scholars are unanimously agreed that no one should pray whilst resisting the urge (to relieve himself) if that will distract him from doing any of the obligatory parts of the prayer properly, even if the urge is not strong.

(End quote from *al-Istidhkar*, 6/20 5).

But if the urge is not strong, and it will not prevent him from doing the obligatory parts of the prayer properly, then in this case the ruling on praying whilst resisting that urge is that it is disliked (makruh), because it is not making the worshipper fail to do the obligatory parts of the prayer; rather it is deemed to be disliked because it means that he will not have full presence of mind due to suppressing that urge, and the worshipper will inevitably be distracted, even if only slightly, from focusing properly on his prayer.

Ibn `Abd al-Barr (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

The scholars differed regarding one who prays when resisting the urge to relieve himself, but he completes his prayer.

Malik said, according to what al-Qasim narrated from him: If that distracts him, and he prays like that, then I prefer for him to repeat the prayer, whether that is within its time or after that.

Ash-Shafa`i, Abu Hanifah and `Abdullah ibn al-Hasan said: It is disliked for him to pray when he is suppressing the urge to relieve himself, but his prayer is valid despite that, if he did not omit any of its obligatory parts.

(End quote from *al-Istidhkar*, 6/205).

Ibn Daqiq al-`Eid (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

Suppressing the urge to urinate or defecate will lead to not doing an essential part of the prayer or not meeting a condition of prayer, or it will not lead to that.

If it leads to that, then he should not start the prayer when that is the case.

If he starts to pray but does not do the essential parts properly or does not meet the conditions, then the prayer is invalid because of that shortcoming.

If it does not lead to that, then the well-known scholarly view is that it is disliked (makruh).

End quote from *Ihkam al-Ahkam Sharh `Umdat al-Ahkam*, 1/146.

And Allah knows best.