642261 - Is it permissible for a woman to pray sitting if it is difficult for her to cover her `awrah whilst standing?

the question

My mother suffers from severe pain in her right forearm, and she cannot move her arm. Putting on and straightening her outer garment (jilbab or khimar) causes her intense pain and hardship. She also does not want anyone to help her to put on her clothes. As for the rest of her body, it is normal and she is physically able to stand, bow and so on, but keeping her `awrah fully covered with the outer garment whilst standing has become extremely difficult for her. Is standing during the prayer still obligatory for her? If there is any small shortcoming in keeping her clothing in place because of her disability, is her prayer still valid?

Summary of answer

She must pray standing, even if some of her `awrah becomes uncovered because she is unable to prevent that. If she can stand, bow and prostate, but she is not able to cover her `awrah fully because she is physically incapable of doing so and cannot adjust her clothes, then she should do what she is able to do, and she is not obliged to do what she is unable to do. There is no blame on her and her prayer is valid.

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

I.

When praying, a woman must cover her `awrah and she should do her best and take all measures to help her keep herself covered and not let her `awrah become uncovered, such as choosing clothing that is appropriate in terms of length, looseness and proper fir that will not cause her any difficulty or pain. That includes altering her outer garment or tailoring it to suit her needs, or using

something to keep it in place, or wearing something that provides complete coverage, such as long trousers and the like. No specific garment is required; rather, the goal is to achieve covering and minimize hardship to the best of one's ability.

II.

If a woman takes all appropriate measures to cover herself when praying, yet despite that some part of her `awrah becomes uncovered when standing, she should still pray standing, especially since the most private part of the `awrah is not being exposed. Standing is more important than covering the less serious parts of the `awrah, because it is an essential part of the prayer and is obligatory for the one who is able to do it, as the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said: "Pray standing, and if you cannot, then sitting." Narrated by al-Bukhari (1050).

And because she is able to stand without harm, so it is not permissible for her not to do it. *Al-Mughni*, 1/424.

Al-Mazri al-Maliki (may Allah have mercy on him) said in *Sharh al-Talqin*, 1/475:

According to the view of Malik, standing is more important because the religious texts did not waive it without giving an alternative, which is sitting, whereas covering the `awrah may be waived and no alternative is given, which indicates that it is less important.

As it is proven that standing is more important, it is given precedence, as what is required is to pray standing. End quote.

In *Al-Kafi fi Fiqh Ahl al-Madinah*, by Ibn `Abd al-Barr, it says (1/239):

If a traveller, or anyone else, cannot find anything to cover their `awrah, he should pray naked while standing, just as anyone who is not naked would. This applies equally to men and women; it is not permissible for anyone to pray sitting down when they are able to stand. If the naked people are a group, they should pray individually. If it is a dark night, they should pray in congregation with one of them leading the prayer. This is the opinion of Malik. End quote.

Ash-Shirazi (may Allah have mercy on him) said in *Al-Muhadhdhab* (1/127):

If he cannot find anything with which to cover his `awrah, he may pray naked, and he should not omit to stand [in the prayer].

Al-Muzani said: He must pray sitting, because by sitting he will cover some of his `awrah, and covering some of the `awrah is more important than standing, because standing may be omitted even when one is able to stand in some situations, but it is not permissible to omit covering the `awrah, so precedence must be given to covering the `awrah.

But this is not correct, because [if he sits] he will not be standing, bowing and prostrating in the proper manner, and he will only be covering a small part of his `awrah, and upholding the essential parts of the prayer is more important than partially upholding one of the obligatory parts [covering the `awrah].

An-Nawawi (may Allah have mercy on him) said in *Al-Majmu` Sharh al-Muhadhdhab* (3/182):

If he cannot find clothing with which to cover himself, he must pray naked and standing, and he does not have to repeat that prayer. This is our view, and it is also the view of `Umar ibn `Abd al-`Aziz, Mujahid and Malik.

Ibn `Umar, `Ata', `Iktimah, Qatadah, al-Awza`i and al-Muzani said: He should pray sitting.

Abu Hanifah said: It is up to him: if he wishes he may pray standing and if he wishes he may pray sitting and gesturing for bowing and prostration, but sitting is better.

Two reports were narrated from Ahmad: the first says that he must stand and the second says that he must sit.

We have noted previously, in the chapter on tayammum, that the Khurasanis narrated three views regarding this matter: the first says that he must stand, the second says that he must sit, and the third says that it is his choice.

The correct view is that he must stand. End quote.

The correct view is that if a woman cannot dress properly and cover her `awrah whilst standing except with great difficulty because of pain in her forearm and finding it too difficult to move it, and she is able to stand, then she should pray standing, because standing is obligatory and is not waived except in the case of being unable to do it, and in this case she is not unable to stand.

She must do whatever she can of the obligatory parts of the prayer, which include standing, covering the `awrah, bowing and prostrating. If she can stand, bow and prostate, but she is not able to cover her `awrah fully because she is physically incapable of doing so and cannot adjust her clothes, then she should do what she is able to do, and she is not obliged to do what she is unable to do.

In that case, she will have feared Allah as much as she is able, in accordance with the verse in which Allah, may He be Exalted, says: {So fear Allāh as much as you are able} [At-Taghabun 64:16].

For more information, see the answer to question no. 67934.

And Allah knows best.