

State of California

Memorandum

Date : October 17, 1996

To : Chaplain William Moors
Protestant Chaplain
California Medical Facility 95687

From : **California Medical Facility - Vacaville**
Imam Muhammad Shareef

Subject: The Religious Foundation For the Use of Perfumed Oils In Islam

This memo is in response to your request from me to supply some information on the religious foundations for the use of perfumed oils by Muslims. The basis of theology and jurisprudence in Islam is to be found in three sources of the Islamic community. These three are [1] the Qur'an, [2] the *Sunna* (personal sayings and practices) of Prophet Muhammad, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, and [3] the consensus of the *sunni* Muslim scholars. Therefore, in question can be referred back to these sources. The validity of all beliefs, actions and customs in Islam come from these three sources and any custom, belief or action which cannot be found in these three sources is not to be considered as Islamic. This also includes the opinion of any Islamic authority, whether he be a Muslim chaplain, *Imam*, or professed Islamic leader - his opinion must also conform to the above three sources. If it does not, then it too is not to be given any jurisprudential authoritative weight.

Quran:

Allah says in the Quran concerning the usage of scented oil; "*And the earth has He appointed for His creatures. Wherein are fruit and sheathed palm-trees, husked grain and **scented fragrances.***" [55:10-12].

Imam Muhammad ibn Ahmad al-Qurtubi said about the above verse in his al-Jaami`u 'l-Ahkaam 'l-Qur'an (A Collection of the Legal Judgements of the Qur'an); "It is said that '*scented fragrances*' are every herbaceous plant which fragrant or sweet smelling and every scented oil derived from rocks, plants or animals. They are called '*scented fragrances*' (*rayhaan*) because mankind smells (*yaraahu*) excellent scented odors from them."

The great Muslim scholar and philosopher Imam Fakhrudeen ar-Razi said about the above verse in his famous at-Tafseer 'l-Kubra (the Great Qur'anic Exegesis); "What is meant by '*scented fragrances*' are three meanings: [1] the scents which are perceived with the olfactory sense; [2] scented leaves from herbaceous plants; and [3] scented fragrances which are well known with mankind and is utilized medicinal or curative elements."

In the above verse Allah has established the use of scented fragrances for mankind in His Qur'an. The proof for this is when He says, "*And the earth has He appointed for His creatures.*" This means what is in the earth is to be utilized for their benefit and among these benefits are *scented fragrances* as it was clarified above by the two distinguished Muslim scholars.

Sunna:

Just as the proof for the use of scented oils and fragrances has its source in the Qur'an, it can also be found in the practices and sayings of Prophet Muhammad, may Allah bless him and grant him peace. It has been reported by Ibn Hibban on the authority of A'isha, (the wife of the Prophet), that the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace said, "*The religion is based upon cleanliness.*" Cleanliness and sweetness of smell comprised a special quality given to the Prophet by Allah.

He also said in a famous statement; "*I have been made to love three things from this world of yours: women; scented oils and prayer. The coolness of my eyes is made in my prayers.*" The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, used to utilize scented oils often and had a strong dislike for foul smells.

It has been related by Imam Muslim on the authority of Anas ibn Malik who said, "I have not smelled amber, musk or anything more fragrant than the smell of the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace." Imam Muslim also related on the authority of Jabir ibn Samura who said that the Messenger of Allah once touched his cheek. He said, "I felt a cool sensation and his hand was scented. It was as if he had taken his hand from a bag of perfume."

Imam al-Bukhari related on the authority of Abdullah who said, "No matter whether he had put scent on his hand or not, if he shook a man's hand, the fragrance would remain with him for the whole day. If the Prophet placed his hand upon the head of a child, that child could be recognized among the other children by that fragrance." Imam al-Bukhari also said in his Tarikh 'l-Kubra (Great History) on the authority of Jabir ibn Abdullah who said, "When the Prophet went down a road, anyone who followed him knew that he had passed that way because of his scent."

The Consensus of the Sunni Scholars:

It has been established above by the Qur'an and the *sunna* of the legal usage of scented oil and perfumes by Muslims. The *sunni* scholars have also established the use of scented oils as being apart of the religious artifacts of the Muslims community.

Imam `Abd 'l-Baari al-`Ashmaawi said in his al-Ashmaawiyya; "One should use scented perfume (*tayyib*) for the prayer." Imam Ahmad ibn Turki al-Maliki said in his al-Jawaahir az-Zakiyya in commentary upon the above; "He did not intend by the above the utilization of scented oils for the purpose of vanity nor to be seen of men. Scents are to be used to follow in the footsteps of the Prophet. The best scented oils for men are those whose color is light but whose scent is strong. The best scented oils for women are those whose color is deep and whose scent is light." This is the opinion of the Maliki scholars.

Imam Abdullah ibn Ahmad al-Maqdasi said in his al-Umdat; "It is highly recommended for the one who attends the collective prayer to take a bath, to wear at least two clean neat garments and to utilize scented oils." Imam Baha 'd-Deen ibn Ibrahim al-Maqdasi said in his al-Uddat in commentary upon the above; "The above statement has been established by what had been related from Salman al-Farsi who said that the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace said, "*A man does not take a bath on the day of Friday prayer, purifies what he is able to purify, utilize oils and scented fragrances kept in his home, and he does not separate two people sitting, then prays what has been prescribed for him, then is silent when the Imam speaks except that Allah forgives him for everything between that Friday and the next.*" This is the opinion of the Hanbali scholars.

Imam Muhammad ibn `Alaan 's-Shaafi` said in his Daleel 'l-Faaliheen in commentary upon the above mentioned prophetic tradition; "The Prophets saying '*utilize oils and scented fragrances kept in his home*', this is an indication that it is highly recommended for

Muslims to keep scented oils and fragrances in their homes and to take as a habitual practice of the usage of the scented oils and fragrances." This is the opinion of the Shaafi` scholars.

Further proof of the obligation (*waajib*) of utilizing scented oils and fragrances is established in the following Prophetic tradition related by Imam Muslim that the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace said, "It is obligatory upon every sexually mature person that on the day of Friday prayer that they take a bath, brush their teeth and rub scented oils on themselves." The word obligation (*waajib*) means that it is a custom which must be done by every Muslim. This is the clearest evidence that scented oils and fragrances are apart of the religious artifacts of the Muslim.

The above gives legal precedence that the use of scented oils and fragrances has been firmly established in the three legal foundations of Islam: the Qur'an; the *Sunna* and the Consensus of the *sunni* scholars. These oils are to be used following in the footsteps of the Prophet for the purpose of cleanliness and worship, not for vanity and showing-off.

Aromatology and the Usage of Scented Fragrances as Medicine:

Imam Ibn al-Qayyim 'l-Jawzi said in his at-Tibb 'n-Nabawwi (the Medicine of the Prophet); "Scented oils (*tiyyib*) gives nourishment to the spirit which is the vehicle of bodily strength. Bodily strength can be either abated or increased by means of scented oils; just as it is increased by means of food and drink. . . Scented oils were among the most beloved things to the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace. To him scented oils were an effective means of preserving his health and warding off ailments and its causes."

Imam al-Jawzi continued; "Amber scents and those fragrances derived from stones are the primary types of scented oils and the most splendid of the variety of fragrances after musk. . . There are many sort of amber or stone origin scents and they have a variety of colors. Some of them are white, gray, red, yellow, green, blue, black and multicolored. However, the best of these is the gray, then the blue, then the yellow. The black rock scents are the worst. . . The temperament of amber rock based scents is hot-dry (air). These scents strengthen the heart, the brain, the sensations and the bodily limbs. These scents are also beneficial in warding off semiparalysis, facial paralysis, sickness derived from excessive mucous, cold gastric ailments, intestinal gas, and nasal obstructions. This is regardless if they are mixed and drank or if they are wiped upon the body. If amber is used as an incense and burnt it is beneficial in curing the common cold, migraines and headaches.

Aloes wood (*'uud*) from India is divided into two types: [1] those utilized as medicine and these are called *qustu* and [2] those utilized for fragrances called *aloes*. It has been related by Imam Muslim on the authority of Ibn Umar, that he used to burn *aloes* as an incense and he would mix *camphor* with it and would say; "Likewise, did the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, use to burn incense."

This fragrance has been established as apart of the luxuries of the people of Paradise. The Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace said; "*And their incense will be aloes*". It has many varieties. The best of these are those derived from India and then those from China. Of these the best type are the black and the blue aloes woods. Its temperament is hot-dry (air). It is useful in opening up nasal obstructions, breaking up gas and is helpful in removing excessive dampness. It is beneficial in strengthening the intestines and in making the heart cheerful. It is benefits the brain, strengthens the sensations, restrains the stomach and is beneficial in the curing incontinence of urine."

Imam Ibn Samjun said, "Aloes has many usages. It is utilized externally and internally. It can be used as an incense by itself or mixed with another scented wood, especially camphor. In this particular mixture it is useful in changing the quality of the air in the body and improving it."

Imam Ibn Qayyim al-Jawzi said in his *at-Tibb 'n-Nabawwi*; "Musk is master of the types of scented oils. It has been established by the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, that he said, "*Musk is the most extraordinary of the scented oils.*" A`isha, the wife of the Prophet said, "I used to apply musk oil perfume on the Prophet before he would dress in the pilgrim garment and on the day of sacrifice before he made circumambulation of the House of Allah." Musk is the master of the varieties of scented oils, the most noble and the best of them. Its temperament is hot-dry (air). It is useful in easing breathing and strengthening it. By smelling or drinking musk oils it fortifies all of the internal organs, and the external limbs are strengthened by applying musk to them externally. It is beneficial in old age and in sickness which result from dampness and chilliness, especially during the winter rainy seasons. It is excellent as a cure for fainting and the palpitation of the heart. It is useful in clarifying the whiteness of the eyes, absorbing its wetness and protecting them from the wind. Musk also invalidates the function of poisons in the body, like the bite of the viper and the like."

All the above indicates the obligation, recommendation and usefulness of the using scented oils by Muslims. The only prohibition which I can see concerning the oils would be the use of glass vial or the use of oils which have an alcohol base. This is clearly a security issue. In the absence of this there is no clear ruling which would prohibit a Muslim from having scented oils.

The use of scented oils is an important part of the Islamic faith. The primary sources for Islam (the Qur'an, the *sunna* and the consensus of the Muslim scholars) are the foundation and precedence for the Muslims to use scented oils during prayer and otherwise. A Muslim is required to prepare himself for prayer by bathing, ablution, wearing his best clothes and using his best scented oils. Being that Muslims must pray five times a day, it indicates that scented oils are a significant part of the daily life of Islam and are routinely used in prayer services and otherwise by Muslims in free society.

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