

Published on Al-Islam.org (https://www.al-islam.org)

Home > The Perfect Role Model: The Prophet of Islam > Opposition to Negative Asceticism

Opposition to Negative Asceticism

Negative asceticism refers to behaving in an extreme manner or living in an austere way that is opposed to the common practice of Muslims. For example, one might refrain from bounties that are deemed permissible, one might behave abnormally in social settings, one might behave in a very dry and pseudo-pious fashion or one might not speak to others and behave as if he alone existed in this world. These sorts of behaviors have been seen amongst some proponents of pseudo-asceticism and amongst some *Sufi* sects.

Without a doubt, the Islamic legal system is a complete and comprehensive one. Its principles for life are based on man's innate nature as well as on his natural needs and desires. For this reason, any form of thinking or behavior that opposes man's innate nature is not to be considered Islamic.

Those who imagine that they can reach gnosticism ('*irfan*) and perfection by means of negative asceticism are making a great mistake. The greatest personality that this world has ever known is the Prophet of Islam (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) who, not only did not behave in such a manner, but also strongly opposed such thinking.

That which Islam and religious leaders are constantly warning us about consists of two things. The first thing we are warned to avoid is being attached to this world and to material possessions. The second is drowning ourselves in pleasure and lust. Making appropriate use of that which God has bestowed upon us while refraining from unnecessary luxuries, however, is the way of the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) and our religious leaders.

The Prophet of Islam (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) strongly opposed negative forms of asceticism and ignoring one's natural desires:

1. The Commander of the Faithful, 'Ali, peace be upon him, has said, "A group from amongst the companions (of the Prophet) would abstain from women, eating during the day and sleeping at night. Umm Salamah (the Prophet's wife) informed the Messenger of God (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) of this and so he went to these companions and said, Do you turn away from women? For verily I approach (my) women and I eat during the day and I sleep at night and he who turns away

from my way of life (sunnah) is not of me. "1

2. One day, three women came to the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him and his family). One of them said, "O Messenger of God, my husband has decided not to associate with women anymore."

Another one of them said, "O Messenger of God, my husband has decided not to eat meat anymore."

The third one said, "O Messenger of God, my husband has decided not to use pleasant fragrances anymore."

The Prophet of Islam (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) became upset upon hearing this for he came to realize that deviant ideas were becoming prominent amongst the Muslims. He went to the mosque even though it was not the customary time. He was in such a hurry that his blessed turban was partly on his shoulder and partly dragging on the ground as he walked. He ordered that the people gather [to hear what he had to say]. They came to the mosque. The Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) went on the pulpit and said, "I have heard that erroneous ideas have become common amongst my companions. What sort of mistaken way of life is this that has become apparent amongst Muslims? I, being a prophet, eat meat. I consume tasty foods. I wear good clothes. I use fragrances. I associate with my wives. So he whose way is not my way of life is not of me. "2

- 1. Da'a'im al-Islam, vol. 2, p. 191, as well as Jami' al-Akhbar, p. 118.
- 2. Wasa'il ash-Shi'ah, vol. 14, p. 74.

Source URL:

https://www.al-islam.org/perfect-role-model-prophet-islam-himmat-suhrab-pur/opposition-negative-a sceticism#comment-0