

Asceticism In Islam

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Abstract

The researchers addressed the concept of asceticism (*zuhd*) in Islam—linguistically, technically, and in its true essence while elucidating its merit within Islam. This was achieved through Qur'ānic verses, prophetic traditions, and scholarly delineations of the legitimate categories and degrees of asceticism. Their exposition adhered to a straightforward juridical framework, underscoring the simplicity of asceticism and its remotensity from the convoluted doctrines of sects divergent from Islam.

The researchers further clarified the authentic indicants of asceticism and distilled a technically sound definition, through which the believer may traverse the path to Almighty Allah adorned with the correct conception of the ascetic faithful.

Additionally, the researchers expounded the asceticism of the best of humanity, the Messenger of Allah (PBUH), the asceticism of his Companions, and that of the righteous forebears of the Ummah from the preferred generations—including the Successors and those who followed. They likewise illuminated the asceticism of subsequent upright scholars of the Ummah.

Finally, the researchers concluded their study by examining erroneous conceptions of the meaning and notion of asceticism, demonstrating that such conceptions contravene and deviate from the authentic understanding of true asceticism. These notions hold no place within asceticism and constitute misconceived constructs.

Keywords: Zuhd – Ascetics – Islam

INTRODUCTION

Praise be to Allah, Lord of the Worlds, and peace and blessings be upon the most noble of prophets and messengers, our Prophet Muhammad, and upon his family and companions, with abundant peace .

Thereafter :

Importance of the Research :

- Clarifying the virtue and reality of asceticism (*zuhd*), and contentment with little .
- Understanding the virtue of asceticism, its degrees, and its divisions .
- Documenting the asceticism of the Prophet (PBUH), the Companions, the Successors, and the scholars, along with its reality .
- Correctly comprehending misconceptions about asceticism and avoiding them .
- Presenting the true image of asceticism, free from distorted concepts of its genuine meaning .

Objectives of the Research :

- Serving Islam and what pertains to it through emulation of the Prophet (PBUH), the people of the preferred generations, and the Muslim scholars, by understanding the reality of asceticism and practicing it .

-Striving to follow the example of the Prophet (PBUH) and the preferred generations, making asceticism a slogan and a way of life for humanity .

-Enriching the Islamic library with knowledge of asceticism and the conditions of the ascetics .

Research Problem and Questions:

The pursuit of ascertaining the intended meaning of asceticism, its definition, virtue, degrees, divisions, and the state of the Prophet (PBUH), the Companions, the Successors, and Muslim scholars regarding it. Additionally, recognizing misconceptions about asceticism is of utmost importance. This was addressed through the following questions :

- What is asceticism and its reality ?
- What is the virtue of asceticism ?
- What are the divisions of asceticism ?
- What are the signs of asceticism ?
- How was the asceticism of the Prophet (PBUH) ?
- How was the asceticism of the righteous predecessors in general ?
- How was the asceticism of the scholars ?
- What are the misconceptions about asceticism ?

Scope of the Research :

The discussion of asceticism is vast and comprehensive, whether in specialized works on the subject or in the books of scholars concerning the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him), the Companions, the Successors, and Muslim scholars—their conditions and methods that indicate their asceticism and renunciation. The research will take the form of collecting hadiths, narrations, and actions of the predecessors regarding their state with asceticism, contentment with little in life, and sufficiency .

Research Methodology:

The methodology adopted in this research is the inductive-deductive approach, achieved through select books of the Sunnah such as *al-Ṣaḥīḥayn* and some collections of Sunan, as well as certain works on asceticism (*zuhd*) and books of spiritual admonitions (*riqāq*).

Research Plan:

The research is divided into an introduction, two sections, each containing several subtopics, and a conclusion .

The Introduction: Includes the research topic, its importance, objectives, problem and questions, and the research plan .

Section One:

- Subtopic 1: Definition and explanation of asceticism .
- Subtopic 2: The reality of asceticism in Islam .
- Subtopic 3: The virtue of asceticism and encouragement toward it .
- Subtopic 4: Divisions and degrees of asceticism .
- Subtopic 5: Signs of asceticism .

Section Two :

- Subtopic 1: The asceticism of the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) .
- Subtopic 2: The asceticism of the righteous predecessors .
- Subtopic 3: The asceticism of the scholars .
- Subtopic 4: Misconceptions about asceticism .

The Conclusion: Includes :

1. The most important research findings .
2. The most prominent recommendations .
3. Indexes of references .

Previous Studies :

2.1. Section One

2.1.1. Definition and Explanation of Asceticism

First: Linguistic Definition of Asceticism

Ibn Manzur states: In the Arabic language, al-zuhd denotes al-zuhd and al-zahada in worldly matters, and al-zuhd is not used except specifically in religion. It is the opposite of al-*raghba* (desire) and of greed for the world, while al-zahada in all things is the opposite of al-*raghba*. The verb forms are *zahida*, *zahada* (the latter being the higher form), with the verbal nouns *zuhd* and *zahad* (the latter with fatha, according to Sibawayh). Also *zahada*, yielding the active participle *zahid* (pl. *zuhhad*), and the passive *zahid*. The perfect forms are *zahida* and *zahida* (both yielding the imperfect *yazhadu*), and al-tazhid in or from a thing is the opposite of al-targhib in it. The causative *zahhada-hu* in the matter means to make him desire to turn away from it. (Ibn Manzur, 1939, 1:193).

Al-Jawhari states: Al-zuhd is the opposite of al-*raghba* (desire). One says: *zahida* in or from the thing (*yazhadu zuhd* and *zahada*). Also *zahada yazhadu* is a variant dialectal form thereof. And so-and-so *yatazahhadu*, meaning he devotes himself to worship. Al-tazhid in or from the thing is the opposite of al-targhib in it.

Al-zahid means the scanty or meager. It is said: a man *zahid al-akl* (of little eating); a valley *zahid* (taking little water); and it is said: take *zahda* what suffices you, meaning just enough to suffice you. And so-and-so *yazhadu ataa fulan*, meaning he considers the gift of so-and-so *zahid* (scanty, little). (Al-Jawhari, 1979, 1:293; Ibn Sida, 2000, 4:228)

As for al-zuhd in the technical shariah sense: The statements of the scholars in describing it have varied. Among them are the following:

What was reported from al-Zuhri through Sufyan ibn Uyayna, who said: al-Zuhri was asked: "What is al-zuhd?" He replied: "That the haram does not overpower his patience, and that the halal does not prevent his gratitude." (Abu Nuyam, 1991, 3:371; Ibn al-Arabi, 1987, 19; al-Bayhaqi, 1989, 4:131). Also, it was reported from Ali ibn al-Madini, who said: Sufyan ibn Uyayna was asked: "What is the limit of al-zuhd?" He replied: "That you be grateful in ease and patient in tribulation. If such is his state, then he is a *zahid*." Sufyan was asked, "What is gratitude?" He said: "That you avoid what Allah has prohibited." (Ibn al-Arabi, 1987, 22)

Shaykh al-Islam Ibn Taymiyya defined it as: "The permissible *zuhd* is the abandonment of desire for what yields no benefit in the Hereafter, namely the superfluities of the permissible that are not employed in assistance toward obedience to Allah." (Ibn Taymiyya, 2005, 10:21) And that al-zuhd consists in abstaining from what yields no benefit—either due to the absence of benefit altogether, or because it is outweighed, inasmuch as it causes one to forfeit what is more beneficial, or because it entails what preponderantly harms over its benefit—whereas pure or preponderant benefits are excluded. (Ibn Taymiyya, 2005, 10:615).

Regarding the distinction between al-wara and al-zuhd, Ibn al-Qayyim indicated in al-Fawa'id: "The difference between it [al-zuhd] and al-wara is that al-zuhd is the abandonment of what yields no benefit in the Hereafter, while al-wara is the abandonment of what one fears may harm in the Hereafter." (Ibn al-Qayyim, 1973, 118).

2.1.2. The Reality of Asceticism in Islam

Ibn Taymiyya stated: "Asceticism in a thing is the absence of volition and aversion, such that one neither desires it nor dislikes it; thus, whoever neither craves a thing nor desires it is *zāhid* therein." (Ibn Taymiyya, 2005, 10:616)

The essence of asceticism is that which characterized the Prophet (PBUH) and the righteous predecessors, for the methodology of the prophets and messengers (PBUT) is founded upon asceticism asceticism in the superfluities of this world that are not fundamental. It entails abandoning what the Messenger of Allah (PUBH) abandoned and turned away from, inasmuch as it yields no benefit in the Hereafter.

Thus, the praiseworthy asceticism in the shari'ah sense is the abandonment of what yields no benefit to the servant in the Hereafter, as Ibn Taymiyya stated: "The permissible asceticism is the abandonment of everything that yields no benefit in the Abode of the Hereafter, coupled with the heart's reliance upon what is with Allah." (Ibn Taymiyya, 2005, 10:641)

Our Prophet Muḥammad (PBUH) was the most ascetic and righteous of all people, yet he never deviated from the moderate path. Allah says: {And thus We have made you a moderate nation that you may be witnesses over mankind and that the Messenger may be a witness over you. And We did not make the qibla which you used to face except that We might know who follows the Messenger from who turns back on his heels. And indeed, it was difficult except for those whom Allah guided. And Allah would never cause your faith to be lost. Indeed, Allah is, to the people, Kind and Merciful. } (Sūrat al-Baqara, 2:143)

His life (PBUH) was filled with obedience and worship, while he attended to his worldly affairs. From this, we perceive his asceticism. Nonetheless, he neither rejected what was present nor pursued what was absent; he wore whatever clothing was available to him, and he censured those who sought to isolate themselves or sever ties with people and life under the pretext of being ascetic therein.

He (PBUH) delineated for us a clear methodology devoid of hardship or extremity. It is reported in Sahih al-Bukhari on the authority of Anas bin Malik, who said: "Three men came to the houses of the wives of the Prophet (PBUH) inquiring about the worship of the Prophet (PBUH). When they were informed, they deemed it great and said: 'Where do we stand in relation to the Prophet (PBUH)? Allah has forgiven him his past and future sins.' One of them said: 'As for me, I shall pray the entire night forever.' Another said: 'I shall fast perpetually and never break my fast.' The third said: 'I shall abstain from women and never marry.' The Messenger of Allah (PBUH) then came and said: 'Are you the ones who said such-and-such? By Allah, I am the most fearful of Allah among you and the most pious, yet I fast and break my fast, I pray and I sleep, and I marry women. Whoever turns away from my Sunna is not of me.'" (Al-Bukhari, 1989, 5:1949; Muslim, 1955, 2:1020)

From the foregoing, it is evident that asceticism is not severance from the world, nor abandonment of family, wealth, and children. Such severance does not constitute asceticism, nor does it reflect the prophetic methodology; rather, it inclines toward innovation.

Al-Ghazali stated: Know that asceticism in this world is a noble station among the stations of the wayfarers (al-salikin). It consists in the turning away of desire from a thing toward what is better than it. Thus, whoever diverts from one thing to another—whether by exchange, sale, or otherwise—diverts from it due to lack of desire for it and diverts to the other due to desire for it. His state, in relation to that from which he diverts, is termed asceticism (zuhd), while in relation to that toward which he diverts, it is termed desire (raghba) and love (hubb).

For this reason, Allah (Exalted be He) says: {*And there came a caravan, and they sent their water-drawer, and he let down his bucket. He said: "Good news! This is a boy," and they concealed him as merchandise. And Allah is All-Knowing of what they do. And they sold him for a meager price—a few counted dirhams—and they were, concerning him, among the ṣābidin.* } (Sūrat Yūsuf, 12:19–20)

This means: they sold him—*sharaw* here being used in the sense of *bā'ū* (they sold). The brothers of Yūsuf are described as exercising asceticism regarding him because they coveted the exclusive attention of their father's countenance .

Thus, whoever sells this world for the Hereafter is ascetic in this world, and whoever sells the Hereafter for this world is likewise ascetic—but in the Hereafter. However, custom has restricted the term "*zuhd*" to one who practices asceticism in this world .

If you relinquish part of this world but not all of it, you are ascetic only with respect to what you have relinquished, not absolutely. If you possess no wealth and this world does not favor you, asceticism cannot be conceived of you, for what one has no power over, one cannot abandon.

The Devil may delude you with his deception, suggesting that since this world has not come to you, you are ascetic in it. You must not descend by the rope of his deceit without securing yourself and reinforcing your position with a firm bond from Allah. If you have not tested the state of capability, do not trust in the ability to abandon. How many have presumed of themselves aversion to sins when they were unattainable, only to plunge into them when means became available—without estimation or fear of creation? If this is the self's deception regarding the prohibited, how much more should you distrust its promises regarding the permissible. The firm bond you take upon it is to test it repeatedly in the state of capability. If it consistently fulfills what it promised, then there is no harm in trusting it .

Know that asceticism is not in relinquishing wealth and expending it out of generosity, chivalry, winning hearts, or ambition. All such acts pertain to the beauties of customary virtues (*maḥāsīn al-‘ādāt*), but none enter the domain of acts of worship (*‘ibādāt*). Rather, asceticism is abandoning this world due to knowledge of its abjectness in comparison to the preciousness of the Hereafter. Any form of abandonment can be conceived of one who does not believe in the Hereafter such may be manliness (*murū‘a*), chivalry (*futūwwa*), generosity (*sakḥā*), or noble character (*ḥusn al-khulq*) but it is not asceticism. For the pursuit of good repute and the inclination of hearts are among the enjoyments of the immediate life, sweeter and more gratifying than wealth itself. Likewise, relinquishing wealth in pursuit of popularity, praise, or fame for chivalry and generosity is not asceticism at all; rather, it is hastening another enjoyment for the soul .

The true ascetic is the one to whom this world comes pure, unblemished, spontaneously while he is capable of enjoying it without diminution of status, ugliness of reputation, or loss of any enjoyment for the soul yet he abandons it out of fear that he might grow familiar with it, thereby becoming intimate with other than Allah and loving what is beside Allah. (Al-Ghazālī, 2009, 4:216, 218)

Ibn al-Qayyim stated: three things validate Asceticism:

The first is the servant's knowledge that this world is a vanishing shadow and a fleeting apparition, as Allah has described it: {Know that the life of this world is but play and amusement, adornment and mutual boasting among you, and rivalry in wealth and children—like the example of a rain whose [resulting] plant growth pleases the tillers; then it dries and you see it turned yellow; then it becomes [scattered] debris. And in the Hereafter is severe punishment and forgiveness from Allah and approval. And what is the worldly life except the enjoyment of delusion? } (Sūrat al-Ḥadīd, 57:20) .Allah also says: {The example of [this] worldly life is but like rain which We have sent down from the sky that the plants of the earth absorb—[those] from which men and livestock eat—until, when the earth has taken on its adornment and is beautified and its people suppose that they have capability over it, there comes to it Our command by night or by day, and We make it as a harvest, as if it had not flourished yesterday. Thus do We detail the signs for a people who give thought. } (Sūrat Yūnus, 10:24) .

And He says: {*And present to them the example of the life of this world, [its being] like rain which We send down from the sky, and the vegetation of the earth mingles with it and [then] it becomes dry remnants scattered by the winds. And Allah is ever, over all things, Perfect in Ability.* } (Sūrat al-Kahf, 18:45) .He termed it “the enjoyment of delusion,” warned against being deceived by it, informed us of the evil end of those deceived, warned us against meeting the same fate, and condemned those who are content with it and feel at ease therein. The Prophet (PBUH) said: “What have I to do with this world? I am but like a rider who seeks shade under a tree, then departs and leaves it behind.” (Al-Tirmidhī, 2009, 4:588; Ibn Mājah, 1952, 2:1376; Aḥmad, 2001, 6:242)

The second is his knowledge that beyond it lies an abode far greater in magnitude and more momentous in consequence: the Abode of Eternity. Its relation to this world is as the Prophet (PBUH) stated: “This world in comparison to the Hereafter is but like one of you dipping his

finger into the sea; let him see what it returns with.” (Al-Bukhārī, 1989, 4:2193; Al-Tirmidhī, 2009, 4:561; Ibn Mājah, 1952, 2:1376)

Thus, the ascetic in this world is like a man holding a counterfeit dirham who is told: “Discard it, and in exchange you shall have one hundred thousand.” He casts it from his hand in hope of that compensation. Asceticism therein, therefore, stems from perfect desire for what is greater than it.

The third is his knowledge that his asceticism in it does not prevent him from anything decreed for him therein, and that his avid pursuit of it does not bring him what has not been ordained for him. When he is certain of this and it becomes knowledge of certainty (ilm al-yaqin) for him, asceticism in it becomes easy for him.

These three matters facilitate for the servant the reality of asceticism and firmly establish his footing in his station. (Ibn al-Qayyim, 1994, 383–384)

Ibn al-Jawzi states: It reached me that one of the ascetics of our time was brought food, and he said: “I will not eat.” He was asked: “Why?” He replied: “Because my soul desires it, and for years I have not granted my soul what it desires.” I said: The path of correctness has been obscured from this man in two respects, the cause of this obscurity being lack of knowledge.

As for the first respect: The Prophet (PBUH) was not upon this path, nor were his Companions. He (PBUH) would eat chicken meat and loved sweets and honey.

What occurred among the ascetics after them in this vein consists of matters appropriated from monasticism (al-rahbaniyya). (Ibn al-Athir, 1979, 2:280) I fear for him the words of Allah: {But those who disbelieved and denied Our signs those are the companions of the Fire; they will abide therein eternally. O you who have believed, do not prohibit the good things which Allah has made lawful for you, and do not transgress. Indeed, Allah does not like transgressors. }(Surat al-Maida, 5:86–87)

Nothing of this sort was narrated from any of the early predecessors among the Companions except when occasioned by a temporary circumstance. Ibrahim bin Adham said: “When the heart is coerced, it becomes blind.” Beneath his statement lies a subtle secret: Almighty Allah has fashioned the nature of the son of Adam upon a wondrous principle, namely, that it selects from among the objects of desire those which benefit it, thereby recognizing through its choice the rectitude of the thing and its own rectitude thereby. Desire is thus a seeker and a scout; it is an excellent motivator toward the body’s welfare. However, when it exceeds bounds, harm ensues; and when what it seeks is absolutely withheld absent any fear of corrupting the ultimate outcome, this leads to the corruption of the soul’s states and the enfeeblement of the body.

This is a foundational principle. If this ascetic comprehended it, he would realize that he has contravened the path of the Messenger (PBUH) and his Companions in terms of transmission, and contravened the ordained wisdom in terms of rationale.

The second respect is that I fear for the ascetic that his desire has inverted toward abandonment, such that he now desires not to partake. Herein lies a subtle ruse of the soul and a refined deception.

Some of the ignorant may say: “This is a dissuasion from goodness and asceticism.” But it is not so, for the ḥadīth is authentically reported from the Prophet (PBUH) that he said: “Every action not in accordance with our command is rejected.” (Al-Bukhārī, 1989, 3:241; Muslim, 1955, 3:1343)

Those who feign asceticism have indeed entered upon paths neither trodden by the Messenger (PBUH) nor his Companions: manifesting excessive humility in speech, roughening garments, and other practices that the common folk have come to admire. For certain individuals, these have become a livelihood, reaping therefrom the kissing of hands and augmented veneration—yet most of them, in private, are upon a state contrary to their public demeanor.

The root of the fundamentals is knowledge, and the most beneficial of knowledges is reflection upon the biography of the Messenger (PBUH) and his Companions: *{Those are the ones whom Allah has guided, so follow their guidance. Say: I ask of you no payment for it. It is not but a reminder for the worlds.}* (Sūrat al-An‘ām, 6:90). (Ibn al-Jawzī, 2004, 62, adapted)

Further elaboration, will follow in clarifying certain erroneous conceptions of asceticism and some states of the ascetics.

2.1.3. The Virtue of Asceticism and Encouragement Toward It

First: From the Noble Qur’an

Allah the Exalted says: *{And those who were given knowledge said, “Woe to you! The reward of Allah is better for those who believe and do righteous deeds, and none shall attain it except those who are patient.”}* (Surah Al-Qasas, Verse 80). Thus, He attributed asceticism to the people of knowledge, describing its adherents with knowledge, which is the utmost praise.

Allah the Exalted also says: *{Whoever desires the harvest of the Hereafter—We increase for him in his harvest. And whoever desires the harvest of this world—We give him thereof, but he will have no share in the Hereafter.}* (Surah Ash-Shura, Verse 20). And He says: *{And do not extend your eyes toward that by which We have given enjoyment to [some] categories of them—the splendor of the worldly life—by which We may test them. And the provision of your Lord is better and more enduring.}* (Surah Taha, Verse 131).

Furthermore, Allah the Exalted says: *{Those who prefer the worldly life over the Hereafter and avert [people] from the way of Allah, seeking to make it deviant—those are in extreme error.}* (Surah Ibrahim, Verse 3). Al-Ghazali commented: “He described the disbelievers with this trait, so its implied meaning is that the believer is characterized by its opposite, which is preferring the Hereafter over the worldly life” (Al-Ghazali, 2009 CE, 4:219).

Allah the Exalted also says: *{And [also] those who had settled in the city and [embraced] faith before them they love those who emigrated to them and find not any want in their breasts of what they were given but give [them] preference over themselves, even though they are in privation. And whoever is protected from the stinginess of his soul it is those who will be the successful.}* (Surah Al-Hashr, Verse 9).

It was narrated by Abu Bakr Al-Dinawari in Al-Mujalasah: Muhammad bin Abd al-Aziz narrated to us, saying: Hudhayfah Al-Mar‘ashi said: “Shu‘ayb Al-Balkhi arrived in Makkah, and Ibrahim bin Adham was in Makkah, so the people gathered and said, ‘Let us bring them together.’ They brought them together in the Sacred Mosque. Ibrahim bin Adham said to Shu‘ayb: ‘O Shu‘ayb, upon what have you founded your principles?’ Shu‘ayb replied: ‘We have founded our principles on the basis that if we are provided for, we eat, and if we are deprived, we endure patiently.’ Ibrahim bin Adham said: ‘That is how the dogs of Balkh behave if provided for, they eat; if deprived, they endure.’ Shu‘ayb asked: ‘Then upon what have you founded your principles, O Abu Ishaq?’ He replied: ‘We have founded our principles on the basis that if we are provided for, we give preference [to others], and if we are deprived, we praise and thank [Allah].’ Thereupon, Shu‘ayb stood up, sat before him, and said: ‘O Abu Ishaq, you are our master’” (Al-Dinawari, 2002, 1:456).

Second: From the Prophetic Sunnah

Narrated by Sahl bin Sa‘d Al-Sa‘idi: A man came to the Prophet (PBUH) and said: “O Messenger of Allah, direct me to a deed which, if I do it, Allah will love me and the people will love me.” He said: “Be ascetic in the world, and Allah will love you; be ascetic in what people possess, and the people will love you” (Ibn Majah, 2009, 2:1373; Al-Tabarani, 1994, 6:193).

Narrated by Anas from the Prophet (PBUH), who said: “O Allah, there is no life except the life of the Hereafter, so forgive the *Ansar* and the *Muhajirun*” (Al-Bukhari, 1989, 5:2357; Muslim, 1955, 3:1431).

Narrated by Abdullah ibn Al-Shikhkhir: I came to the Prophet (PBUH) while he was reciting *{The mutual rivalry for piling up [worldly things] diverts you}* (Surah At-Takathur, Verse 1). He said: "The son of Adam says: 'My wealth, my wealth!' But do you have, O son of Adam, anything of your wealth except what you ate and consumed, or wore and wore out, or gave in charity and sent ahead?" (Muslim, 1955, 4:2273).

Narrated by Ibn Umar: The Messenger of Allah (PBUH) took hold of my shoulders and said: "Be in this world as if you were a stranger or a wayfarer." Ibn Umar (may Allah be pleased with them both) used to say: "When evening comes, do not expect the morning; when morning comes, do not expect the evening. Take from your health for your illness and from your life for your death" (Al-Bukhari, 1989 5:2358).

Narrated by Abdullah bin Abbas and Imran bin Husayn: The Messenger of Allah (PBUH) said: "I looked into Paradise and saw that most of its inhabitants were the poor; I looked into the Fire and saw that most of its inhabitants were women" (Al-Bukhari, 1989, 5:2369; Muslim, 1955, 4:2096).

Narrated by Al-Nu'man ibn Bashir (may Allah be pleased with him): "Are you not in [a state of] food and drink as you desire? I saw your Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) unable to find even poor-quality dates to fill his stomach" (Muslim, 1955 CE, 4:2284).

Narrated by Abu Hurayrah: He passed by a people who had a roasted sheep in front of them, and they invited him, but he refused to eat. He said: "The Messenger of Allah (PBUH) left this world without having his fill of barley bread" (Al-Bukhari, 1989, 5:2066).

Narrated by Abu Hurayrah: The Messenger of Allah (PBUH) said: "The world is a prison for the believer and a paradise for the disbeliever" (Muslim, 1955, 4:2272).

Narrated by Ibn Umar: I heard the Prophet (PBUH) say: "The believer eats in one intestine, while the disbeliever eats in seven intestines" (Al-Bukhari, 1989, 5:2061; Muslim, 1955, 3:1631). Al-Qurtubi commented: "This is an encouragement to reduce [attachment to] the world, to practice asceticism in it, and to be content with what is sufficient" (Al-Qurtubi, 1964, 7:193).

2.1.4. Divisions of Asceticism (*Zuhd*) and Its Degrees

1. Divisions of Asceticism

Ibn al-Qayyim stated: "Asceticism is divided into four categories:

The first is obligatory upon every Muslim: asceticism in what is prohibited (*ḥarām*). Should one neglect this, the cause for punishment is established, and it must inevitably produce its effect unless countered by an opposing cause.

The second is the recommended (*mustaḥabb*), varying in degrees of recommendation according to what is renounced: asceticism in what is reprehensible (*makrūh*), in superfluities of the permissible, and in excessive indulgence in lawful desires.

The third pertains to those who embark upon this path—those traversing the way to Allah—and comprises two types :

1. Asceticism in the world as a whole. This does not mean physically abandoning it, leaving one's hands empty, or sitting destitute of it. Rather, it means completely expelling it from the heart: paying no heed to it, preventing it from residing therein, even if it remains in one's possession. True asceticism is not abandoning the world from one's hand while it lingers in the heart; rather, it is abandoning it from the heart while it may remain in the hand. This was the state of the Rightly Guided Caliphs and 'Umar bin 'Abd al-'Azīz, whose asceticism is proverbial despite the treasuries of wealth being under his control. It was likewise the state of the Master of the Children of Adam (PBUH) when Allah opened the world to him as He did yet this only increased his asceticism therein .

2. Asceticism in one's own self this is the most difficult and arduous of the divisions. Most ascetics reach it but do not fully enter it. The ascetic finds it easy to renounce the prohibited due to its evil consequence, the ugliness of its fruit, the protection of his religion, the preservation of

his faith, preference for eternal pleasure and bliss over punishment, disdain for sharing in the ways of the corrupt and immoral, and vigilance against being subjugated by his enemy. He finds it easy to renounce the reprehensible and superfluities of the permissible upon realizing what he forfeits of everlasting joy, perpetual delight, and abiding bliss by preferring them. He finds asceticism in the world feasible through knowledge of what lies beyond it, the perfect compensation he seeks, and the loftier aspiration he pursues .

Meanwhile asceticism in the self is its slaughter without a blade and it too is of two kinds :

a. As a means and a beginning: to deaden the self such that no esteem remains for it in one's sight. One neither becomes angry on its behalf, nor pleased for it, nor defends it, nor seeks vengeance for it. One has offered its honor in anticipation of the day of its poverty and need. It is too insignificant in one's estimation to warrant defense or retaliation; rather, it is viler to him than what is said about it. Or one compels it away from what serves one's interest and success, even if difficult for it. Though this is a slaughter of the self and a mortification of its nature and traits, it is the very essence of its life and soundness. There is no life for it without this. One watches the abodes of those brought near [to Allah] from this final pass .

b. As an end and perfection: to offer the self entirely to the Beloved, retaining nothing of it. One becomes ascetic toward it as a true lover is ascetic toward a paltry sum of his wealth to which his beloved's desire has attached. Would he find in his heart any inclination to withhold that sum or deny it to his beloved? Thus is the asceticism of the sincere lover in his self: he has departed from it and surrendered it to his Lord, perpetually offering it to Him in anticipation of its acceptance. The fourth is an asceticism encompassing all of the above: asceticism in everything other than Allah in anything that distracts one from Him" (Ibn al-Qayyim, 1964, pp. 381, 384).

2. Degrees of Asceticism

Asceticism comprises three degrees:

The First Degree: Asceticism in Doubtful Matters (*Shubuhāt*)

This is abandoning what is ambiguous to the servant—whether it be lawful or unlawful as in the ḥadīth of al-Nu'mān ibn Bashīr from the Prophet (PBUH): "What is lawful is clear and what is unlawful is clear, and between them are doubtful matters which many people do not know. Whoever avoids the doubtful matters has protected his religion and honor, and whoever falls into doubtful matters falls into the unlawful like a shepherd who grazes around a sanctuary, likely to enter it. Indeed, every king has a sanctuary, and the sanctuary of Allah is His prohibitions. Indeed, in the body there is a lump of flesh: if it is sound, the whole body is sound; if it is corrupt, the whole body is corrupt. Indeed, it is the heart" (al-Bukhārī, 1989, 1:28; Muslim, 1955, 3:1219) . Doubtful matters form a barrier (*barẓakh*) between the lawful and the unlawful. Almighty Allah has placed a barrier between every pair of opposites: death and what follows it as a barrier between this world and the Hereafter; sins as a barrier between faith and disbelief; the Heights (*al-A'raf*) as a barrier between Paradise and Hell; and likewise, in the stations of the spiritual journey, a barrier exists between every two stations, known to the traveler therein. Many states and spiritual arrivals are barriers; their possessor imagines them to be the ultimate goal. None are free from this illusion except the jurists of the path the scholars who serve as guides therein.

The Second Degree: Asceticism in Superfluities (*Fudul*)

Superfluities are what exceed the measure of need. The people of this degree are higher and more exalted, for they seize moments of leisure and fill their time with Allah. If one occupies himself with worldly superfluities, he forfeits his share of capitalizing on the opportunity of time—for time is a sword: if you do not use it to cut, it cuts you .

Filling time means occupying every instant with what draws one nearer to Allah or aids therein—be it food, drink, marriage, sleep, or rest. Whenever one takes these to gain strength for what Allah loves and to avoid what He dislikes, they become part of filling time, even if one derives

full pleasure therefrom. Thus, do not suppose that filling time requires abandoning pleasures and delights .

Undoubtedly, when the soul obtains a sound portion of the world, it is strengthened, gladdened, gathers its faculties, and its dispersion ceases. Asceticism is not valid for the servant until he severs the heart's agitation tied to worldly causes—whether desire, fear, love, hate, or striving. For asceticism is the asceticism of the heart, not merely abandonment by the hand or other limbs. It is the heart's freedom from the world, not mere physical detachment from it.

The Third Degree: Asceticism in Asceticism Itself

This comprises three aspects :

First: Despising what one has renounced. Whoever's heart is filled with love and magnification of Allah does not regard what he has abandoned of the world for His sake as worthy of being an offering. For the entire world, in Allah's estimation, is not worth the wing of a mosquito. Thus, the knower (*'arif*) does not view his asceticism therein as a grand matter to be counted or celebrated .

Second: Equivalence of states in his sight—abandoning what he renounced and taking it become equal to him, for it holds no value in his estimation. This is among the subtleties of the jurisprudence of asceticism: he remains ascetic whether taking or leaving, for his aspiration transcends observing acquisition or abandonment due to its insignificance in his eyes .

Third: Departure from witnessing acquisition. This means that one who deems the world insignificant in his heart, with states of taking and leaving equal to him, does not perceive that he has acquired any degree with Allah by abandoning it—for it is too trivial in his sight to imagine that its renunciation earns him exalted ranks (Ibn al-Qayyim, 1973, 2:15, 20).

2.2. Section Two:

2.2.1. The Asceticism of the Prophet (PBUH)

Among the narrations concerning his asceticism (PBUH):

Narrated by 'Ā'ishah: "We, the family of Muḥammad (PBUH), would pass a month without kindling a fire—it was nothing but dates and water" (al-Bukhārī, 1989, 5:2372; Muslim, 1955, 4:2282).

Narrated by Aishah: "The Messenger of Allah (PBUH) passed away while there was nothing on my shelf that a living being could eat except a small amount of barley on a shelf of mine. I ate from it until it lasted long upon me, then I measured it and it finished" (al-Bukhari, 1989, 3:1129; Muslim, 1955, 4:2282).

Al-Numan bin Bashir delivered a sermon in which he said: Umar mentioned what people had acquired of the world and said: "I saw the Messenger of Allah (PBUH) spending the entire day writhing [in hunger], unable to find even poor-quality dates to fill his stomach" (Muslim, 1955, 4:5228).

Narrated by Aishah: "The bedding of the Messenger of Allah (PBUH) was made of leather stuffed with palm fibers" (Muslim, 1955, 2:1105).

Narrated by Amr bin al-Harith: "The Messenger of Allah (PBUH) left at his death neither a dirham nor a dinar, neither a male slave nor a female slave, nor anything except his white mule, his weapons, and a piece of land he made into charity" (al-Bukhari, 1989, 3:1005).

Narrated by Aishah: "The Messenger of Allah (PBUH) passed away while his armor was pawned to a Jew for thirty saa of barley" (al-Bukhari, 1989, 3:1068).

2.2.2. Subsection 2: The Asceticism of the Righteous Predecessors (*al-Salaf*)

The righteous predecessors from among the Companions set the most exemplary models in their asceticism and austerity. This research presents only the asceticism of some of the Companions. Aḥmad narrated in *al-Zuhd* that Abū Bakr had a servant. Whenever he brought his yield, Abū Bakr would not eat from it until he asked about it. If it was something permissible, he would eat;

if it was something reprehensible, he would not eat. He said: “One night he forgot and ate without asking, then he asked about it and was informed that it was from something he disliked, so he inserted his hand and vomited” (Ibn Ḥanbal, 2002, p. 113).

Ibn al-Mubārak narrated in *al-Zuhd* from the path of Muṣ‘ab bin Sa‘d, from Ḥafṣah, that she said to ‘Umar: “Will you not wear a garment softer than your garment and eat food better than this food of yours? Allah has opened the land to you and expanded provision upon you.” He said: “I will hold you accountable to yourself.” Then he mentioned the affair of the Messenger of Allah (PBUH) and what he endured of harsh living, continuing to mention it until she wept. Then ‘Umar said: “I will share with them in the like of their harsh living so that perhaps I may attain with them the like of their comfortable living” (Ibn al-Mubārak, 2010, p. 201).

Ibn Abi Shaybah narrated through Abu Salamah bin Abd al-Rahman, from Sad, who said: “By Allah, he was not the earliest of us in Islam nor the earliest in emigration, but you have come to know by what he excelled us: he was the most ascetic of us in the world—meaning Umar ibn al-Khattab” (Ibn Abi Shaybah, 1995, 11:121, 12:192).

Ibn Abi Shaybah narrated in *al-Musannaf* from through Zubayd al-Yami, from a man of Bani Amir, who said: Ali ibn Abi Talib said: “Indeed, the two things I fear most for you are lengthy hopes and following desires. As for lengthy hopes, they cause forgetfulness of the Hereafter; as for following desires, they divert from the truth. Behold, the world has turned away departing, and the Hereafter is approaching. Each has its own progeny, so be among the progeny of the Hereafter and do not be among the progeny of the world. For today there is action without reckoning, and tomorrow there is reckoning without action” (Ibn Abi Shaybah, 1995, 12:200).

Ibn Abi Shaybah narrated through Abu Qays, from Hudhayl, from Abdullah, who said: “Whoever desires the Hereafter harms the world, and whoever desires the world harms the Hereafter. O people, harm the transient for the sake of the eternal” (Ibn Abi Shaybah, 1995, 12:205).

Ibn Abi Shaybah narrated through al-Amash, from Khaythamah, who said: Abu al-Darda said: “I was a merchant before Muhammad (PBUH) was sent. When Muhammad was sent, I engaged in trade and worship, but they did not combine, so I took worship and left trade” (Ibn Abi Shaybah, 1995, 12:226).

Ibn Abi Shaybah narrated in *al-Musannaf* through Salim bin Abi al-Jad, from Jabir, who said: “None of us encountered the world except that he inclined toward it and it inclined toward him—except Abdullah bin Umar” (Ibn Abi Shaybah, 1995, 12:231).

2.2.3. The Asceticism of the Scholars

Al-Saymari narrated through al-Hasan bin Hammad, who said: I heard Ibn al-Mubarak say and he mentioned Abu Hanifah “What do you think you can say about a man to whom the world and immense wealth were offered, yet he cast them behind his back? He was whipped, and it was said to him, ‘Take the world,’ but he endured both ease and hardship. He did not enter into what others sought and desired. By Allah, he was contrary to those we witnessed pursuing the world while the world fled from him, and the world came to him while he fled from it” (al-Saymari, 1985, p. 46).

Abu Nuyaym narrated through Abu Thawr: Al-Shafii intended to travel to Makkah with some money in his possession. I said to him—rarely did he hold onto anything due to his generosity—“You should buy an estate with this money for your children after you.” He departed, then returned to us. I asked him about that money and what he had done with it. He said: “I did not find an estate in Makkah that I could buy, for I know its people—most of it has been charged too high for me. However, I built a house in Makkah for our companions to stay in when they perform Hajj” (Abu Nuyaym, 1991, 9:127).

Al-Shafii said: “Whoever claims that he has combined love of the world and love of its Creator in his heart has lied” (al-Ghazali, 2009, 1:25).

Yunus bin Abd al-Ala said: Al-Shafii said to me: “O Abu Musa, I have grown accustomed to poverty until I no longer feel estranged by it” (Ibn Asakir, 1994, 51:397).

Ishaq bin Hani said: One day I rose early to discuss asceticism with Ahmad, so I spread out a mat and a pillow for him. He looked at the mat and pillow and said: “What is this?” I said: “For us to sit on.” He said: “Remove it. Asceticism is not seemly except with asceticism.” So I removed it, and he sat on the bare ground (Ibn Abi Yala, 1952 CE, 1:10).

Al-Bazzar said in al-Alam al-Aliyyah regarding Shaykh al-Islam Ibn Taymiyyah: As for the asceticism of Imam Ibn Taymiyyah, Allah made it his hallmark from his youth. All who saw him especially those who accompanied him for long agreed that they had never seen his like in asceticism toward the world. This became so renowned about him that if a common person from a distant land were asked in a given year: “Who is the most ascetic of this era, the most complete in rejecting worldly superfluities, and the most focused on seeking the Hereafter?” he would say: “I have not heard of anyone like Ibn Taymiyyah.”

This renown stemmed only from his extreme asceticism coupled with sound intention. It was never heard that he desired a beautiful wife or a fair maiden, coveted a dinar or dirham, sought fine mounts, livestock, or luxurious garments, competed for leadership, or was seen striving to acquire permissible things though kings, princes, merchants, and notables were at his command, submissive to his word, eager to draw near to his heart however possible, manifesting reverence for him. How does his state compare to those whom Satan incited to attack him?! Did they not look with insight at their traits versus his, their marks versus his their mutual envy in pursuing the world, his freedom from it, and his utmost flight from it?!

As for his worship, as the Imams reported: Rarely was the like of it heard. He devoted most of his time and life to worship, leaving no distraction for himself from Allah or what is intended for Him neither family nor wealth. In the night, he was alone with all people absent, empty before his Lord, supplicating to Him, steadfast in reciting the Mighty Quran, repeating various forms of nocturnal and diurnal devotion. When he entered prayer, his limbs trembled until he swayed right and left. If he saw something objectionable on his path, he removed it; if he heard of a funeral, he hastened to pray over it; or he regretted missing it (al-Bazzar, 1979, pp. 39, 49, with adaptation).

2.2.4 Misconceptions about Asceticism

Among the misconceptions about asceticism and its methodology:

First: Idleness and Abandoning Work

Islam came with asceticism, encouraged it, and commanded striving in the earth for earning and seeking provision. The transience of the world does not prevent a person from earning a livelihood. This misconception has deceived some whose knowledge is scant due to their lack of understanding and learning. Allah, the Exalted, says: ﴿It is He Who made the earth subservient to you, so walk in its paths and eat of His provision. And to Him is the resurrection.﴾ (Sūrat al-Mulk, Verse 15). He also says: ﴿And seek by means of what Allah has given you the home of the Hereafter, and do not neglect your share of the world. Do good as Allah has done good to you, and do not seek corruption in the earth. Indeed, Allah does not love the corruptors.﴾ (Sūrat al-Qaṣaṣ, Verse 77). And He says: ﴿O Children of Adam, take your adornment at every place of prostration, and eat and drink, but do not be extravagant. Indeed, He does not love the extravagant.﴾ (31) Say: Who has forbidden the adornment of Allah which He has brought forth for His servants and the good things of provision? Say: They are for those who believe during the worldly life, exclusively on the Day of Resurrection. Thus do We detail the verses for a people who know.﴾ (Sūrat al-A‘rāf, Verses 31–32).

The observer of the biography of the Prophet (PBUH) the master of the ascetics would discover that he did not abandon the world entirely nor sever himself from it completely. He is the one who said (PBUH): “Women, perfume, and the coolness of my eye in prayer were made beloved

to me from your world” (Ibn Ḥanbal, 2001, 19:307). Likewise, his righteous and pious Companions the best of this nation and the most ascetic in the world after the Prophets did not abandon the world entirely. Among them were merchants, farmers, shepherds, and cultivators. Ibn Masud said: “I indeed detest seeing a man idle, neither engaged in worldly work nor in the work of the Hereafter” (al-Tabarani, 1994, 9:102).

Ibn al-Jawzi narrated with his chain to Abu al-Qasim ibn al-Khatli, who said: I asked Ahmad bin Hanbal and said: “What do you say about a man who sits in his house or mosque and says: ‘I will not work until my provision comes to me?’” Ahmad said: “This is a man ignorant of knowledge. Have you not heard the saying of the Messenger of Allah: ‘Allah has placed my provision under the shadow of my spear,’ and the other hadith mentioning the birds that go out hungry in the morning—mentioning that they go out seeking provision?” He cited: {Indeed, your Lord knows that you stand [in prayer] almost two-thirds of the night or half of it or a third of it, and [so do] a group of those with you. And Allah determines [the extent of] the night and the day. He knows that you [Muslims] will not be able to do it, so He has turned to you [in mercy]. So recite what is easy [for you] of the Quran. He knows that there will be among you those who are ill and others traveling throughout the land seeking [something] of the bounty of Allah and others fighting in the way of Allah. So recite what is easy from it and establish prayer and give zakah and loan Allah a good loan. And whatever good you put forward for yourselves—you will find it with Allah. It is better and greater in reward. And seek forgiveness of Allah. Indeed, Allah is Forgiving and Merciful. } (Surat al-Muzzammil, Verse 20).

And: {There is no blame upon you for seeking bounty from your Lord [during Hajj]. But when you depart from Arafat, remember Allah at al-Mashar al-Haram. And remember Him as He has guided you, for indeed, you were before that among those astray. } (Surat al-Baqarah, Verse 198). The Companions of the Messenger of Allah traded on land and sea and worked in their palm groves—we have them as exemplars. We previously mentioned regarding Ahmad that a man said to him: “I wish to perform Hajj relying on tawakkul.” He said: “Then set out without the caravan.” The man said: “No.” He replied: “Then you have relied on the people’s provisions” (Ibn al-Jawzi, 1985, p. 252).

Ibn al-Jawzi said: The pseudo-ascetics have introduced into the religion what repels people, to the point that they view their actions and enslave the path. Most of the proofs of this path come from storytellers. When a common person enters their gatherings—unable even to perform ablution properly—they address him with the subtleties of al-Junayd and the guidance of al-Shibli. The commoner then imagines that the clear path is to confine himself to a corner, abandon earning for his family, and commune with the Truth in solitude claiming so while knowing neither the pillars of prayer, nor its etiquettes from knowledge, nor rectifying his character through the company of scholars. Thus, he benefits from his seclusion only as a donkey benefits from a stable. If time prolongs his austerity, his dryness increases, and he may be afflicted with melancholia (al-Suyūṭī, 1986, 1:35 corruption of thought in Greek terminology, and waswās in Arabic) seeing phantoms he imagines to be angels, then lowering his head and extending his hand for kissing. We have seen many farmers abandon cultivation, sit in a corner, and reach this state, finding rest from his toil? If told: “Visit the sick,” he says: “I have no habit of it.” May Allah curse a habit that opposes the Sharī‘ah (Ibn al-Jawzī, 1985, p. 134).

Second: Solitude and Isolation from People

There is no doubt that the ascetics preferred seclusion over mingling, due to the benefits they experienced in isolating themselves from people, devoting themselves to worship and obedience, and curbing the soul from desires.

Yet Satan had a share with those who followed this path—except those upon whom Allah had mercy. Satan adorned for some of them certain misconceptions in the name of asceticism, such as abandoning congregational and Friday prayers, responding to invitations, visiting the sick, and

attending to the needs of family and children—and other acts of obedience that require social interaction. No rational person doubts that this is not part of the religion and was not the way of the Prophet (PBUH) or his noble Companions.

Ibn al-Jawzī said: “Among the innovations of the pseudo-ascetics is that they confine themselves to a corner: they neither visit a friend nor attend to the sick, claiming they seek detachment from people to engage in worship. In reality, they are establishing customs so that they may be pointed to as detached. If they walked among people, their awe would vanish. The people were not like this. The Messenger of Allah (PBUH) used to visit the sick and purchase needs from the market; Abū Bakr traded in cloth; Abū ‘Ubaydah bin al-Jarrāḥ dug graves; and Abū Ṭalḥah did likewise” (Ibn al-Jawzī, 2004, p. 397).

He also said: “One day I rose early seeking seclusion at the mosque of al-Ruṣāfah. I wandered alone, reflecting on that place and those scholars and righteous people who had been there. I saw people who had resided nearby, so I asked one of them: ‘How long have you been here?’ He indicated to me nearly forty years. I saw him in a room full of filth and dirt. I began to reflect on his imprisonment of himself from marriage for this duration. The soul began to praise this and condemn the world and delusion with it. Then knowledge rebuked the soul, understanding arose regarding the realities of matters, and the position of the Sharī‘ah strengthened what knowledge had said. From this, it resolved that I said to the soul: ‘Know that these people are of two types. Some strive against themselves in enduring these states, thereby missing the virtues of mingling with people of knowledge, work, seeking offspring, benefiting creation, and benefiting themselves through the company of those of understanding. This produces in them a state resembling wild animals, leading them to prefer isolation.

Their nature may become dry, their character sour; prolonged retention of semen may produce poisons that corrupt body and mind; seclusion may induce confusion; they may imagine themselves among the *awliya*’ (beloved ones) and suffice with what they know; Satan may conjure illusions for them which they count as *karāmāt* (miracles); they may think what they are in is the ultimate goal, unaware that it is closer to the reprehensible.

For the Messenger of Allah (PBUH) forbade a man from spending the night alone (Ibn Ḥanbal, 2001, 2:91). Yet each of these spends the night alone. He forbade celibacy (al-Bukhārī, 1989, 5:1952; Muslim, 1955, 2:1020) and forbade monasticism (Ibn Ḥanbal, 2001, 6:226).

The second type: Shaykhs who been overwhelmingly engrossed and thus detached by necessity, having no abode—they are in the station of the *Zamāniyyīn*” (Ibn al-Jawzī, 2004 CE, p. 145).

Third: Turning Away from Knowledge Under the Pretext of Occupying Oneself with Asceticism

Ibn al-Jawzī said in *Ṣayd al-Khaṭīr*: “What increases the excellence of knowledge in my view is that some people occupied themselves with worship to the exclusion of knowledge, thus halting short of attaining the realities of seeking.

It is narrated from one of the early scholars that he said to a man: ‘O Abā al-Walīd—if you are truly Abā al-Walīd.’ He was wary of giving him a *kunya* when he had no child. Had this man delved deeply into knowledge, he would have known that the Prophet (PBUH) gave Ṣuhayb the kunyah Abū Yaḥyā and gave a child the *kunya*, saying: ‘O Abū ‘Umayr, what did the nugayr do?’” (Ibn al-Jawzī, 2004, p. 87).

He then said: “The benefit of knowledge is well-known, while the asceticism of the ascetic does not extend beyond the threshold of his door. The utmost of the scholars is their management of the permissible through knowledge, whereas most pseudo-ascetics are ignorant and are enslaved by hand-kissing for abandoning what is permitted” (Ibn al-Jawzī, 2004, p. 147).

This is among the subtle stratagems of the devil, and the devil indeed proved true in his conjecture about them. He did this and adorned it for them for two reasons:

1. He wanted them to walk in darkness .

2. Reviewing knowledge every day increases the scholar, unveils what was hidden from him, strengthens his faith and gnosis, and shows him the flaws in many of his paths when he examines the methodology of the Messenger (PBUH) and the Companions.

Thus, Iblis sought to block those paths with the most subtle stratagem: he made it appear that the objective is action, not knowledge for its own sake. It was concealed from the deceived that knowledge is itself action or leads to action.

Beware this subtle deception, for knowledge is the greatest foundation and the brightest light. Sometimes turning the pages [of books] is superior to fasting, prayer, and jihād. How many who turn away from knowledge plunge into abysses of caprice in their worship, forfeit much of the obligatory for the supererogatory, and occupy themselves with what they deem preferable over the obligatory?

Had they possessed even a spark of the light of knowledge, they would have been guided. Reflect upon what has been mentioned, and you will be guided, if Allah wills (Ibn al-Jawzī, 2004, p. 113).

Fourth: Dependence (*Tawākuḥ*) and Abandoning Means Under the Pretext of Trust in Allah (*Tawakkul*)

What some ascetics among the Sufis who deviated from the methodology of the Prophet (PBUH) and his noble Companions adopted, namely that dependence (*tawakul*) and complete neglect of means is the very essence of trust in Allah (*tawakkul*), is undoubtedly a thought utterly deviant from the correct path. This deviation leads a person to further deviations, such as abandoning earning and striving for provision under the claim that they contradict the alleged dependence.

Ibn al-Jawzī said: “If a man asked the Sufis: ‘From where shall I feed my family?’ they would say: ‘You have committed shirk!’ If asked about one who goes out to trade, they would say: ‘He is neither a *mutawakkil* (someone who trusts Allah) nor a *mumin* (believer)’” (Ibn al-Jawzī, 1985, p. 251).

Trust in Allah (*tawakkul*) does not preclude precaution and safeguarding.

Abu Nuyaym narrated with his chain in *al-Hilyah* from Abu Sulayman al-Darani, who said: “Had we truly placed trust in Allah, we would not build walls nor place locks on doors out of fear of thieves” (Abu Nuyaym, 1991 CE, 9:256).

This statement—meaning complete disregard for means—is what the scholars have ruled as antithetical to the Shariah, because Allah has commanded us to take legitimate means and has attached reward and punishment to them in accordance with His knowledge and wisdom.

Fifth: Ostentatious Asceticism or Subtle Ostentation (*Riya*)

Ibn al-Jawzī said: “What the devil most often uses to deceive worshippers and ascetics is subtle ostentation. As for overt ostentation, it does not enter into deception—such as displaying emaciation, pallor of the face, and disheveled hair to indicate asceticism. Such outward signs are not hidden. We point rather to subtle ostentation. The Prophet (PBUH) said: ‘Actions are judged by intentions,’ and whenever an action is not intended for the countenance of Allah, it is not accepted. Malik bin Dinar said: ‘Say to one who is not sincere: Do not weary yourself.’”

Out of fear of ostentation, the righteous concealed their deeds, guarding them and adorning them with their opposites. Thus, Ibn Sirin would laugh by day and weep by night” (Ibn al-Jawzī, 1985, pp. 137–138).

He also said: “The Salaf would repel from themselves anything that would cause people to point to them and flee from any place where they were pointed out.

Among the ascetics are those who wear torn garments without mending them, neglect to adjust their turbans or comb their beards, to show that they possess nothing better from the world. This is among the doors of ostentation. If sincere in turning away from its allure as was said to Dawud al-Tai: ‘Will you not comb your beard?’ and he replied: ‘I am too occupied with it’ let it be known that he has taken a path other than the straight one, for this was not the way of the Messenger of Allah (PBUH) nor his Companions. He would comb his hair, look in the mirror, anoint himself, and apply perfume while being the most occupied of creation with the Hereafter.

Abu Bakr and Umar would dye with henna and katam, though they were the most fearful and ascetic of the Companions. Whoever claims a rank exceeding the Sunnah and the actions of the great predecessors should not be given attention.

Among the ascetics are those who adhere to perpetual silence and isolate from mingling with their families, harming them with ugly character and excessive withdrawal, forgetting the saying of the Prophet (PBUH): ‘Your family has a right over you’ (Ibn al-Jawzī, 1985, p. 140).

The Messenger of Allah (PBUH) would jest, play with children, and converse with his wives. Among the ascetics are those who admire their own deeds if told: ‘You are one of the pillars of the earth,’ they would deem it true. Some await the manifestation of their *karāmāt*, imagining that if they approached water, they could walk upon it” (Ibn al-Jawzī, 1985, p. 140).

He also said: “I have seen among the ascetics of our time such arrogance, preservation of prestige, and elevation in the hearts of the common people that I nearly concluded they were people of ostentation and hypocrisy. You see one of them wearing a garment deemed ascetic in appearance, eating the finest foods, acting superior to peers, befriending the wealthy, distancing the poor, loving to be addressed as ‘Mawlānā,’ having his needs attended to, wasting time in greetings and service to him, and varying in people’s service and salutations. Had he worn a garment blending him with the jurists, his prestige would vanish, leaving him no foothold. If his actions matched, the matter would be lighter but they adorn for those whose affairs are not hidden from them among creation. How then with the Creator (Glorified and Exalted)?” (Ibn al-Jawzī, 2004, p. 382).

Al-Qushayri said in his Risalah, citing Abu Ali al-Juzjani: “Be a person of steadfastness, not a seeker of karamat, for your soul is in motion seeking karamat, while your Lord (Glorified and Exalted) demands steadfastness from you” (Ibn Taymiyyah, 1991, 2:357).

3.1. CONCLUSION: CONTAINING THE MOST IMPORTANT RESULTS AND PROMINENT RECOMMENDATIONS, AS FOLLOWS

3.1.1. First: The Most Important Results of the Research

The research encompassed results, including :

- Clarification of the definition of asceticism (zuhd) linguistically and terminologically .
- Explanation of the reality of asceticism in Islam .
- Demonstration of the virtue of asceticism and the encouragement toward it .
- Mention of the divisions of asceticism and its degrees .
- Elucidation of the signs of asceticism .
- Presentation of the asceticism of the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) .
- Presentation of the asceticism of the Pious Predecessors (al-Salaf) .
- Presentation of the asceticism of the scholars .
- Mention of erroneous concepts of asceticism.

3.1.2. Second: The Most Prominent Recommendations

-Devoting attention and care to compiling the prophetic ḥadīths from the books of the Sunnah and works composed on asceticism; authenticating their ḥadīths, discussing their narrators, and organizing those ḥadīths under general headings .

-Devoting attention and care to compiling the narrations transmitted from the Companions (may Allah be pleased with them) from the books of the Sunnah and works composed on asceticism; authenticating their ḥadīths, discussing their narrators, and organizing those ḥadīths under general headings .

-Devoting attention and care to compiling the statements of the Salaf (may Allah have mercy upon them) from their books and works in which they addressed asceticism, and placing their statements under headings that indicate their discussion of asceticism .

- Conducting a comprehensive comparative study to clarify the concept of asceticism and its practice as it was with the righteous Salaf, in contrast to what emerged among some Ṣūfis regarding the concept of asceticism and its practice.

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