A study of attitude polarization in worshiping God from the perspective Imam Ali (AS) and its resolution

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Abstract

The purpose of this article, which is based on Nahjolbalagha and implemented through library research and taking notes from commentaries written for Nahjolbalagha, is to explore the harms of obedience and servitude path in the words of the Imam Ali (AS) or the harms of polarized attitudes towards worshiping Allah including defects such as unwillingness to worship, experience of suffering and torment, tendency to follow deviant sects and the loss of opportunities and regret. Moreover, through an exploration of the eloquent words of Imam Ali (AS), we will delve into some of the proposed coping strategies including invocation of God, patience in worship, sufficiency of performing obligations at the time of dejection and practicing recommended acts of worship at the time of bliss, and Worshipping at the time of physical health.

Keywords: worship, defects, polarized attitudes, strategies, Imam Ali
Introduction

Statement of the problem

According to the book of life, Holy Quran, the main purpose of human creation is to worship God, "We did not create humans and Jinan except for worshipping" (Dhariyat, 56). This illustrates the importance of worship in Islam, as it can help one grow closer to God. To reach this status, specific instructions have been issued by God, which failure to practice them would lead to deviations (excess and negligence).

Given the significance of this matter, there is a high probability of deviation compared to other matters. Such deviation is usually embodies in form of excess and negligence. Imam Ali says, "Any sluggishness would be harmful as any excess would be corruptive (Dashti, 2007). According to this principle, every movement outside the path of moderation will certainly bring about distortions and damages.

Identifying these defects and deviations as well as the proper way to deal with them is one of the ways of achieving true worship of God Almighty.

Therefore, this paper seeks to explore defects and deviations and strategies to tackle these issues by reference to the eloquent speeches of Imam Ali (AS).

Significance of the subject

Worship or adoration is institutionalized in the nature of all human beings and the spirit of worship is inherent in all mankind. At times, it is channeled to the straight path and leads to divine worship while at other times, it strays from the straight path and falls prey to excessive and negligent behavior.

According to Imam Ali, “More than often, a ignorant is either an extremist and trespasser or a sluggish and wasteful man” (Dashti, 2007).

True worship and sincere obedience must prevent man from arrogance and selfishness, but when one is strayed from the straight path into the trap of extremism, it will either give rise to vanity and egotism or lead to wastage and negligence, which will cause grief and the loss of opportunities.

Background of the study

On the subject of worship, valuable and useful contents have been presented, but there is a paucity of comprehensive research and theses in this field based on Alavi teachings. More importantly, none of such studies have independently approached this issue in Nahj and Alavi’s teaching with only a few of them discussing the issue of excess or negligence in prayers. Some of these articles and theses are as follows:

Tahere. Alami, 2008, negligence from the perspective of Quran and Hadith, Osoul al-Din University

http://www.ijhcs.com/index.php/ijhcs/index
Mohammad Mousavi, A study of excess and negligence in Islam, Faculty of Theology and Islamic Sciences of Yazd.

And considering that temperance and moderation are assumed to be the middle ground on the continuum of excess and negligence, the following articles can be cited:

Rasoul Zerafat, 2011, Studying the place of moderation in the Qur'an and traditions, Qom University of Theology and Islamic Teachings.

Fatima Kheirkhahe Sabet, 2000, Moderation and its manifestations in the Qur'an, Tarbiat Modarres University.

Gol Nesae Shariatipour, 2013, Moderation in Nahj al-Balagha, Faculty of Literature and Humanities of Lorestan Province.

Hossein Kamali Dowlatâbâdi, 2012, Explaining and exploring the philosophy of worship in the views of Imam Ali, Kashan Faculty of Humanities.

In above studies, the emphasis is on a discussion of moderation or extravagance in the Qur'an and Sunnah, without any particular reference to the issue of excess and negligence in worship, but the main purpose of this paper is to address the problem of polarized attitudes towards worship as well as its coping strategies in the words of Imam Ali (AS).

**Research Objectives**

The purpose of this paper is to identify defects and flaws that man may face in the path of worship (including fasting, prayer and other acts of obligatory and recommended prayers), through the eloquent words of Imam Ali (As) as well as coping strategies recommended by Imam for the true followers of Islam.

**Research hypotheses**

What are the instances of excess and negligence of worship in the view of Imam Ali (AS) and what solutions have been proposed to deal with these issues?

What are the negative implications of excess in worship for the worshipers?

What are the negative implications of negligence in worship for the worshipers?

What recommendations have been proposed by Imam Ali (AS) to avoid negative implications of excess and negligence in worship?

**Research method**

For data collection, library research and notetaking method were adopted based on commentaries of Nahj al-Balagha.
Harms of excess:

Worship is one of the noblest things in Islam and special emphasis has been placed on moderation in worshipping in Islam. It is obvious that worshipping and seeking God through prayer is of highest value in Islam, but it is still subject to damages of excess and indulgence. It is because spending too much time and energy in doing acts of worship may prevent one from carrying out other tasks, leading to the disruption of moderation in achieving values.

In the words of the Imam Ali (AS), there are many statements that discourage men from excess and negligence in anything including worship "We are in the middle ground and practice mediocrity; those who have fallen back should attempt to keep up with us and those ahead of us should revert to our position and refrain from excess and negligence." (Dashti, 2007)

Table 1-Harms of excess

Suffering and torment

Undermining obligations

Lack of attention to holding prayers on time

Pride, selfishness and arrogance

Unwillingness to act of prayers

Tendency to join deviant sects

1. Undermining obligations

Imam Ali says: “Recommended prayers, if posing any detriment to obligatory prayers, would not help getting close to God” (Dashti, 2007). Whenever performing a recommended act exerts a negative effect on one’s obligations, this would diminish the value and divine reward of such an act. For instance, consider someone who stays up until midnight to mourn for the anguish of Infallible Imams, but he sleeps through the morning prayers. The reason is clear because duties and obligations have certain benefits the abandonment of which can impose serious damages to humans, while it is not the case for recommended acts of worship” (Makarem Shirazi et al., 2011)

In another piece of Wisdom, Imam Ali(AS) says, “When performing Nafelehs (recommended acts of prayers) harms the fulfillment of duties and obligations, one should abandon them” (Dashti, 2007) (In such cases, you should suffice to the performance of obligations, which does not come easy to anyone either).

2. Suffering and torments

One of the harms of excess in worship is related to the sufferings and difficulties that the performance of recommended acts of prayers may bring about.
In this regard, Imam Ali says, “Do not bear a burden that is beyond your tolerance because its weight would hold you back (Dashti, 2007)

When the performance of recommended acts of prayers withhold one from practicing duties and obligations, it will not only eliminate any values of such prayer, but also amount to a sin, because the excessive observation of recommended acts have resulted in the loss of obligatory acts, which is qualifies for a sin.

As a result, one should bear sufferings and difficulties and spiritual fatigue both in this world and the Hereafter "(Khoei, 1400 AH)

In this regard, Imam Ali says, “There are many who gain nothing from their fasting except hunger and thirst as those who stay up all nights for the purpose of saying prayers and worshipping God but they achieve nothing but fatigue and insomnia. How great is the sleep and the Iftar of the wise (Dashti, 2007) (Excess in worship is an example of suffering and anguish)

"The surface layer of prayers is the act of worshipping, but at the heart of worships resides educational philosophies aimed at bringing one closer to God. For example, if there is no heart in prayers, it would certainly deprive one form its intended educational outcomes, namely withdrawal from sins, getting closer to God and washing one’s heart from the stain of sins. Similarly, in the case of fasting, there are superficial acts such as refrainment from eating and drinking and some other sensual pleasures while the philosophy of fasting is strengthening the faith and fighting with one’s Self and internal devil without which the purpose of fasting, i.e. piety, is not realized, and it will not protect ones from divine punishment (Makarem Shirazi et al., 2011)

3-Tendency to deviant sect

One main damage caused by excess in worship is developing a predilection towards deviant sects such as Wahhabism and Sufism. “There are many who gain nothing from their fasting except hunger and thirst as those who stay up all nights for the purpose of saying prayers and worshipping God but they achieve nothing but fatigue and insomnia How great is the sleep and the Iftar of the wise (Makarem Shirazi et al., 2011)

"Like extremist Wahhabi in our time, who closely resemble Kharijites, they are stubborn and short-minded people who excommunicates anyone except people of their own sect and massacre tens of hundreds of innocent people, women and children, youths and olds, with the ease of mind, and then hold their formal prayers in orderly processions while long Quranic surah are recited by their prayer leader, whispering amen after reciting al-Fatiha surah and their overemphasis on the importance of accentuating "not the ignorant ones" in Fatiha surah” (Makarem Shirazi et al., 2011)

Another group of sanctimonious worshippers abandon their families and society and shelter in a deserted place with abundant hardships so that they can spend more time on praying God and getting closer to God. They refrain from enjoying things granted to them by Allah on the ground that they can dedicate more time to the worship of God. These are the same monastics and groups of Sufis who have been misguided in the way of divine revelation.
"Islam is a moderate religion, discouraging its followers either from abandoning the world (monasticism) or immersion in the worldly life (Wahhabis). Islam recommends a middle path of moderation.

4. Unwillingness to perform acts of worship

Another important harm caused by excessive worshipping is unwillingness towards acts of prayers. Most people fail to abide by this principle (moderation in worshipping), therefore not only rendering their efforts fruitless, but also generate negative outcomes as well. Such excessive behaviors are detrimental both to the person conducting them and those who are observant of such manners. It is harmful for the former because such extreme manners are difficult to sustain and sooner or later one will grow tired of their observance and seek to refrain from shouldering the responsibilities of such burdens. It is damaging to the observers (especially children) because it undermines their tendency to follow religion and perform its practices.

As Imam Ali says, "A minor act sustained willingly and delightfully is more likely to continue compared to hard and boring tasks (Dashti, 2007).

Observes of acts of worship, especially given the outcomes of such acts, will result in excessive fatigue and frustration, which make people less willing to repeat them in future. However, if such acts are practiced in commensurate with one’s strength, people will be more likely to carry them on.

5. Arrogance, pride and selfishness

In one of his wise sayings, Imam Ali says, “A wrong act that makes you sorrowful (remorseful) is better than a good deed that makes you proud before God” (Dashti, 2007).

"A sinful man who is penitent of his wrong deed and attempts to repent and compensate for it is better than one who takes pride in his acts of goodness (excessive worship) and takes the path of arrogance and vanity”. Excess in worship can deepen conceit and vanity. (Makarem Shirazi et al., 2011)

6. Lack of attention to holding prayers on time

In a letter to Mohammed bin Abi Bakr, Imam says, “Say your daily prayers at their due time, not in such a manner that you haste in saying prayers at your free time to delay their fulfillment when you are entangled in daily affairs. Beware that all of your actions are conditional on these prayers (Dashti, 2007)

Those suffering from excessiveness in worship gradually grow inattentive to the time of obligatory prayers so that they perform religious duties whenever they desire and evade other religious obligations at other times. The moderate worshippers would certainly pay close attention to the exact time of prayers, as these obligations are not to be performed haphazardly and the timing should be observed “(Rejali Tehrani, 2011).
Damages of negligence

According to Imam Ali (AS), “For every moment, there is a certain action that can be done, and you do not need to spend your time in vain.”

In reality, if you do not perform an act in its due time, you may never find a suitable time to do it. It is especially true about the time of worships (obligatory prayers) in which when the due time of a prayer is passed, one would never acquire the virtue necessary to carry out that certain act and thus miss a particular virtue like saying prayers on time. Thus, man should be vigilant not to miss opportunities a negligence in acts will cause serious harms. In this part of the article, a discussion of negligence harms has been presented.

Table 2: Harms of negligence

Missing opportunities

Regretting

Incurring loss

Violating divine limits

Thinking low of some good deeds

Deprivation from the aid of the Infallible Imams and Heavenly blessings

Missing opportunities and feeling sorrow

It has been quoted from Imam Ali (As) that, “Loss of opportunity would induce sorrow”. (Dashti, 2007)

Many works, particularly important ones, requires certain preparations and preconditions, which are sometimes out of one’s power. For example, youth, leisure, business vitality and health are all among the opportunities that pass quickly and cannot be compensated for easily.

After all, all the blessings of God bestowed upon humans in this world are transient. There is another saying from Imam Ali about the loss of opportunity, ”Opportunities pass by like clouds, so be prompt on taking advantage of them” (Dashti, 2007)

What is meant by opportunity is the complete preparation of the means of doing good deeds, like providing one with all the arrangements of continuing education. Since opportunities are a combination of multiple factors, and each of these factors can change over time, there is a strong emphasis on sizing opportunities in traditions as one would regret missing such chances.

Imam Ali says, ”One who fails to bring an act to conclusion would experience great grief.” That is, negligence in undertaking any act in this world and the Hereafter would cause sorrow as such fail-
ure would make that act imperfect, and negligence in taking care of religious practices and duties would bring about tremendous punishment. "Makarem Shirazi et al, 2011)

2. Regretting

Regret and compunction are signs of disrupted moderation and lack of balance in worship. As Imam Ali says, “Beware of negligence, for it would bring about regret, when the regret will be useless.”

A wise man would wait in anticipation of opportunities to perform an act of goodness and take the most of the situation, but sometimes man misses an opportunity as a result of ignorance, indolence and negligence, and later regrets the lost chance and his hesitation in taking advantage of that opportunity.

In another word of wisdom, Imam Ali states, “The result of negligence and neglect is nothing but regret and the outcome of foresight isthe health of body (Dashti, 2007).

Reflecting on the consequences of one’s actions and its implications would obviate the twinge of regret. Therefore, one should steer clear of such actions (negligence) and have the consequences of an act in mind. In conjunction with regret caused by neglectful practices, Imam Ali (AS) says, “The result of losing time is nothing but regret”.

3. Incurring loss

At the heart of the matter, incurring loss means losing one’s capital (life) without the hope of regaining or squandering a huge wealth without reaping its profits. At the Day of Judgment, the believers would rue their negligence in performing more acts of goodness.

In this regard, Imam Ali says, “Negligence in doing good deeds, even assured of their rewards, incur loss and damage (Dashti, 2007).

The world is a place for doing good deeds and any failure, delay or wrong management of such acts would result in tremendous loses. In fact, the world is a place to accumulate provisions for the Hereafter, and any negligence in this process would incur loss and damage.”(Makarem Shirazi et al., 2011)

4. Violating divine limits

According to Imam Ali (AS), “A major loss incurred by excess and negligence in worship is that it wipes out one’s obligatory acts of worship, (Dashti, 2007)

God has prescribed certain duties for you, which should not be left unfulfilled, and set certain limits and boundaries that should not be exceeded.

"Trespassing the divine limits, whether through excess or negligence, can negatively affect one’s religious obligations. Excess would lead to fatigue and negligence would incur loss. "(Makarem Shirazi et al., 2011)
5. Thinking low of some good deeds

Many people tend to ignore small acts of goodness whereas such apparently small acts may be of vital importance. If man remains mindful of good deeds (minor act of worship), these acts would accumulate little by little and gradually grow into a sea of blessings, which also prepare one for other forms of worships and greater acts of goodness. Moreover, performing a minor act of goodness with the aim of God’s obedience will magnify its effect, as a sin, no matter how small, will be great before the eyes of God Almighty.

On this subject, Imam Ali (AS) says, "Practice good deeds and never think low of any act of goodness, as a minor act of goodness would be rewarded profusely (Dashti, 2011)

It is worth noting that no act of goodness, even saying short prayers in a limited time or making a donation as small as half of a date, should be considered worthless or trivial, as it not only deprives one of the huge effect and reward promised for these acts, but also makes one indifferent to such good deeds, which may lead to negligence.

6. Deprivation from the aid of the Infallible Imams and Heavenly blessings

Imam Ali says, “Be observant of obligations and never fail in their practice; fulfill your obligations accurately as they guide you to the heaven. (Dashti, 2007)

For man, even more important than any act of worship (both obligatory and recommended ones) is fulfilling one’s obligations, which are indeed practicinpiety. Performing the recommended prayers are conditional on possessing the required strength and power because the fulfillment of obligations would make one closer to God and divine paradise as any neglect in their practice would bear consequences.

Piety is shield for man in this world and the path of heaven in the hereafter. (Dashti, 2007)

In another tradition, it has been quoted from Imam, “By fulfilling the obligations and duties set for you, pay the divine rights and relieve yourself of this great responsibility, for I will bear witness to your deeds and provide proofs and evidences on your behalf at the Day of Judgment.”

In other words, the intervention of Imams would belong to anyone, provided that they have strong beliefs, righteous deeds and persistence on their acts.”

Strategies to overcome the damages of excess and negligence

Table 3. Strategies for overcoming the damages of excess and negligence

Observing other believers at the time of prayers

Saying prayers with wretched hearts and being satisfied with the fulfillment of obligations

Seeking help from God Almighty
Performing obligations at their due time

Dedicating the best of one’s times to worship

Worshipping at the time of physical health

Listening to words of wisdom

Practicing patience

Moderation in eating

Making promises to one’s Self

1. Seeking help from God Almighty

"In our daily prayers, we repeat the verse “Thou alone we worship and only thou we seek help”” (Al-Fatiha, 5) and ask God to help us in all affairs of life. This is an evidence for the necessity of seeking God's help and pleading for His grace."

Imam Ali also states, “In your affairs, plead Him for what might happen in the future.” He also says, “And plead Him for [helping you to] fulfilling your duties, and thanking His countless blessings and mercies (Dashti, 2007).

One must know that nothing can be done without the help of God and trust in Him, and it is His assistance that protects man from harms of excess and negligence in worship.

2. Practicing patience

Patience means controlling one’s Self and practicing self-restraint in the face of problems, either in the performance of obligations and abandoning sins.

Imam Ali also says, “Patience is of two types: patience on what you like and patience on what you dislike (Dashti, 2007). “Succeeding in getting close to God and even achieving materialistic objectives and financial means in the world is not an even path, but it is a rocky, rugged path with bottlenecks, cliffs and wild animals. If one retains insufficient patience and strength, these obstacles would hamper his progress. Thus, patience and resistance are the most important means of man’s victory in this world and the Hereafter” (Makarem Shirazi et al., 2011). The result of this patience is much more valuable than the transient pleasure of neglect in performing acts of worship and devotion. Patience is a way of avoiding access and negligence.

3. Dedicating the best of one’s time to worship

In his letter to Malek Ashtar, Imam Ali says, “You have to dedicate the best of your time to your privacy with God, and one of the things that you should be aware of in particular, is the fulfillment of obligations, which is exclusive to this pure essence. Therefore, one’s body should be completely
at the service of God to conduct impeccably the things that make him closer to God, irrespective of the physical fatigue and annoyance that might be associated with them” (Dashti, 2007).

As noted by Imam, one should put aside the best of his time to communicate with God and plead in supplication to Allah. In this context, the best time is used to refer to the time of bliss and happiness in the absence of any preoccupation, because it is at this time that one’s presence of heart is more notable. In the absence of such bliss and when one’s mind is preoccupied, the acts of worship may seem exhausting so that even some people decide to abandon their prayers.

Choosing the right time means the time of pleasure, delight and health of body and soul, which can saved one from the harms of negligence.

4. Worshipping at the time of physical health

According to Imam Ali, “Whenever you have the strength, dedicate your strength to the obedience of God, and at the time of weakness, devote your disability to the disobedience of God. That is, whenever you possess any strength and ability, use it for the worship of God (Dashti, 2007)

God in his infinite wisdom has bestowed the gift of youth and health to you, so that it can be spent on His obedience. It is because the acts of worship conducted at the time of youth and health of body are incomparable to the acts of worship performed at the old age. Therefore, a physically fit body and a delighted spirit would be more convenient and powerful at worshipping, even difficult prayers such staying wake at Qadrnights or fasting during hot summer days. However, if these acts are postponed for old age, it is possible that one’s life does not allow the chance of fulfilling these duties.

5. Moderation in eating

One of the factors contributing to the waste in permissible acts is extravagant eating. This may lead to the proliferation and dominance of demands and finally, disability and indolence, which may explain the secret of self-esteem (Zakeri, 2006)

In the words of Imam Ali, “Any negligence [in eating]is harmful as is any excess and profusion. (Dashti, 2007)

In this regard, Imam Lai says, “I recommend you to moderation in foods(to eat proportionally), as it is far from extravagance, healthy for the body and conducive to the worship (Dashti, 2007).

Inadequate-eating would cause physical atrophy and diseases and the sick body lacks the energy and enthusiasm required for worship, even the obligatory ones. On the other hand, overeating will encourage indolence and lethargy, which is related to neglect in prayers.

As Imam says, moderation in eating will be beneficial to human health, protecting one from negligence and laxity in acts of worship.
6. Saying prayers with wretched hearts and being satisfied with the fulfillment of obligations

Humans are in a state of flux in terms of temperaments and at times, human’s spirit is delightful and exuberant with body and mind ready for fulfilling acts of worship and servitude of God. In such cases, not only obligations, but also recommended acts of prayers can be performed with the presence of heart. Nonetheless, when the human’s spirit is exhausted, his mind is busy with worldly affairs, his body is sick and he is not in mood of doing anything, the mere fulfillment of obligations would suffice.

In this regard, Imam Ali says, “Hearts may be willing and unwilling in the practice of charity and worship. At the time of willingness, the obligations would be supplemented by recommended acts, but at the time of fatigue and boredom, the mere performance of obligations would be sufficient (Dashti, 2007)

Similarly, in Wisdom 282, Imam says, “Little action sustained by vitality and delight is more promising than an act performed in frustration (Dashti, 2007)

The recommended acts of worship should be done from the bottom of one’s heart, and it is only under this condition that one can fulfill these acts ofworships an informal prayers. However, in the absence of such keenness of heart for the implementation’ of these acts, the opposite results may be achieved. It is because compulsion and force in the fulfillment of recommended acts are against the teachings of Islam, for Islam is a moderate religion that disagrees with any form of excess and negligence in worship.

The practice of recommended acts when one’s heart is willing and obligations when the heart is reluctant would obviate excess and negligence in performing acts of worship.

7. Listening to words of wisdoms

Like bodies, hearts also may experience depression and fatigue, so they would require wise words and sermons to reinvigorate them, escape from the state of lethargy and despair and turn to the worship of God. In part of a letter to his son, Imam Ali says, “O’ my son! I recommend you to piety and abidance by divine rules, comforting your soul with his remembrance and grasping the divine string, for there is nothing more assuring as your connection with God. Enliven your heart with sermons and advice (Dashti, 2007).

In another tradition, Imam says, “Hearts grow tired as bodies become fatigued. Words of wisdoms should be sought to refresh them again” (Dashti, 2007). The importance of maintaining balanced worship in Islam is such that believers have been advised against worships and prayers that diminish their vigor and enthusiasm. The faithful servants of God turn to recommended acts of worship and prayers at the time of fitness and mental freshness and when overwhelmed by illness and frailty, they go around doing other things”(Kariminia, 1998)

Progressing in all areas of life and elevating to lofty religious levels are all achieved at the delight of heart. It is because the heart's vitality revives one’s power and stimulates the organs into action. In contrast, when the heart is dull and bored, the vigor for action is lessened and human’s function is
weakened. For the bliss and freshness of heart, playing sports, traveling with friends and relatives, and enjoying permissible pleasures are recommended.

"Some experts argue that “fresh wisdoms” means legitimate pleasures, delightful dialogues, humorous stories and listening to beautiful poems (Hamidzada, 2006)

Thus, according to Imam Ali (AS), “Piety, sermons and fresh wisdoms” are necessary for individuals.

The fostering of piety would increase the effect of sermons and advices on man while engendering happiness of body and soul, which together prepare the ground for the establishment of a connection with God, far from any excess and negligence in acts of worship.

8. Making promises to one’s Self

The Self is like a rebellious and cantankerous horse that must be tamed by application of certain means. In fact, it should be trained to be used for the achievement of the intended objectives.

According to Imam Ali (AS), “Deceive yourself in worshipping so that you are motivated to perform these acts willingly and refrain from any exertion of force. At any case, incorporate delight and in your prayer except for the fulfillment of obligations and compulsory acts that you are forced to bear their performance (Hashemi Khoi, 1400 AH)

What is meant by deception is to tantalize your Self by the promise of paradise and to warn it by the punishment of Inferno so that it may grow fond of worshipping.

Another point raised in Imam’s statement is that where the Self is bored and tired, one should not beurer any pressure to perform these acts because it discourages man from the fulfillment of recommended acts of worship.

On the contrary, one should put effort in the practice of these acts at the time of bliss and happiness so their enthusiasm and vigor persist unabatedly.

Thus, for the person suffering from excess and negligence and uncommitted to the commands of God, a motivation is required for the performance of obligations and abandonment of prohibitions, or the observance of religious laws. For this encouragement to be effective in the soul and spirit of the person, one approach is to take into account the religious promises about the paradise as well as the warnings against divine punishments meted out for failure in the fulfillment of obligations. This would certainly deter one from any excess and negligence.

9- Observing other believers at the time of prayers

"Imam Ali (AS) says, “When you are saying prayers for the people and some people are standing behind you, you must not make it too long so that they are discouraged from prayers held in congregation. Also, you must not make it too short so that it ruins the prayers. Some of the people standing behind you may be struggling with a disease, preoccupation or other needs.”
Imam mentions in this saying: “Among people standing with you in prayer, there are some sick individuals or those with urgent needs. Therefore, it is rational that Imam considers their situation so that they would not begin to dislike prayer in congregation. Also, you should say prayers with the situation of the weakest of worshippers in mind.”

On the rejection of excess and negligence and maintaining moderation, Imam Sadeq (AS) said to his companions, “Never ignore the fact that you should not be too harsh on the people. You have to consider their capacity, endurance and ability and try to do something that attracts people to the religion rather than discourage them from it.”(Wasael al-Shia)

It is noteworthy that one way to draw people, especially the youth, to acts of worship such as prayer and fasting, among others, is performing the worships correctly as advised by the prominent figure of religion while considering the worshippers. This saves us from the abyss of excess and negligence.

10- Performing obligations at their due time

In a part of Imam Ali’s letter to Muhammad Ibn Abi Bakr, it has been mentioned, "Say your prayers in their due time, not when you have nothing else to do, or before their due time or postponing them after taking care of all of your businesses. Keep in mind that all your good deeds depend on your prayers. (Dashti, 2007)

In another saying, Imam Ali stats, “At the time of saying obligatory prayers, never say any recommended prayers. The priority should be given to obligatory prayers, and then other informal prayers (compensation for lost obligatory prayers or recommended prayers) can be said (Dashti, 2007).

The point that must be kept in mind is that the reason for abandoning obligatory acts and performing recommended religious duties could be a one’s interest in that recommended deed, whether due to the attraction of public to that act of worship or because it brings happiness, but performing obligatory duties does not bring much happiness or maybe people think that compensating for lost prayers is compulsory and thus without any reward, but doing the recommended acts would bring profuse rewards for them.

According to the religious teachings of Islam, performing the obligatory duties at their due time not only brings huge rewards in this world and the hereafter, but also allows one to enjoy divine blessings as well. The wise man should know that these blessings of God will save him from the abyss of destruction, namely excess and negligence.

Conclusion

When man wants to be a servant of God, all of his worships and deeds should be impeccable. A man deserves to be called the servant of God when his worships and obedience bereft of any hypocrisy or arrogance. Worship God through prayers is of high values in Islam, but if you go to excess in doing it, it will lose its value and any negligence in doing so will prevent you from attaining the desired outcomes.

Therefore, what is accepted in Islam is moderation and refrainment from any excess and negligence. Thus, the true value of worships lies in their proper fulfillment and moderation in practice.

Seeking the help of God, practicing patience, dedicating the best of one’s times to worship, moderation in eating, worshipping at the health of body and willingness of heart, being satisfied with obligatory deeds when the heart is unwilling and making promise to one’s Self are only some of the techniques that can help avoid the negative effects of excess and negligence.
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