

ANALYSIS OF THE CONCEPT OF "ASCETISM" AND ATTITUDE TO ASCETIAN PRACTICES IN RELIGIONS

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Abstract: This article analyzes the definitions given to the concept of asceticism, the differences in approaches to the practical aspects of ascetic views. It has been established that each of the world's religions has a specially formed ascetic state, and this also creates mutual differences. The phenomenon of asceticism is revealed in its own way from the religious and philosophical teachings of Hinduism, Jainism, monotheistic religions, Judaism, Christianity and Islam.

Keywords: Asceticism, phenomenon, monotheism, Hinduism, Jainism, Judaism, Christianity, Islam, zuhd.

1. Relevance:

The concept of asceticism has been defined based on different approaches. In a general sense, asceticism can be said to be a conscious and purposeful abstinence to purify the body and soul and to achieve a certain spiritual and moral ideal. This term belongs to a number of fields (scientific, philosophical, religious, and social). In ancient times, the word asceticism had three main meanings - physical (exercise of the body), moral (exercise of the mind and will), and religious (improvement of the heart, refraining from bad inclinations and passions).) expressed in terms. In addition, asceticism is considered a moral standard for certain social purposes.

Researchers divide asceticism into spiritual and material types. Spiritual asceticism means abstaining from various sensual pleasures, while material asceticism, in turn, means giving up certain advantages of modern civilization.

Almost all ancient philosophers addressed the topic of studying the ascetic state. Already in this period, the term asceticism was used in three different meanings: physical, spiritual, and religious. Asceticism and ascetic practices were analyzed by Eastern and Western scientists and researchers in the Middle Ages, it is known from the works and sources that have reached us. In particular, this topic attracted not only philosophers but also theologians, sociologists, and historians.

The most common approach to the interpretation of asceticism in modern research is the activity approach proposed by the American theologian, theologian, and historian R. Valantasis: asceticism is "an activity aimed at opening a new subjectivity, other social relations and an alternative symbolic universe within the existing social environment."

In "The Encyclopedia of Religion": "Asceticism cannot be precisely defined as a modern word, but from a religious point of view, it is a voluntary and systematic activity to limit oneself from emotional and worldly pleasures and achieve perfection in order to enter the divine path or reach a higher spiritual level" is defined as.

One of the common features of all religions and systems in the world is the presence of some ascetic aspects in them. But this does not mean that all ascetic processes are exactly the same. The ascetic state, which is formed separately in each religion, also creates mutual differences.

2. Methods and level of study:

The article is covered on the basis of the generally accepted historical methods - historicity, comparative-logical analysis, sequence, impartiality principles, and the philosophers of Antiquity also used the term asceticism in three different meanings in that period: physical (physical exercises), spiritual (mind and exercises of the will) and religious (freeing the soul from evil inclinations and passions) are analyzed. It has been established that each of the world's religions has a specially formed

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ascetic state, and this also creates mutual differences. For example, although there are no generic forms of asceticism in African religions, some tribes believe that the elder (shaman) sings hymns to the gods for a long time without ceasing (in order not to be distracted) from the community (while beating a small drum rhythmically) and finally joins the gods. it was considered that he could enter into communication, that in order to maintain communication with the gods, he was required to comply with certain conditions, to abstain from forbidden (taboo) foods.

It is explained that asceticism is highly valued in Hinduism based on religious-philosophical teachings, it is believed that supernatural power can be mastered through it, and moreover, asceticism is considered to be the only way to get rid of the chain of rebirth. According to Govinda Lama Anagarika (Ernest Lothar Goffmann, 1898-1985), a famous scientist who studied the ascetic practice in Buddhism within the framework of religious and philosophical teachings, there are three levels of perfection: the first level is only physical suffering, the second is a mental state, that is, a person's disillusionment with life and at the third level, suffering becomes comprehensive and becomes an integral part of the surrounding existence.

Among the monotheistic religions, the phenomenon of asceticism is analyzed in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Although asceticism was not considered an important aspect in the early days of Judaism, later it acquired significant religious content during the reign of the Roman Empire, especially in the Nazarite, Qumran, Essenes, and Khavar (Pharisee community) directions of Judaism. In Christianity, asceticism is considered a concept that governs the will of a person, that is, the main principle of Christian asceticism lies in the spirit of a person and the movement of God in the way of fulfilling the commandments, that is, divine and human synergism (cooperation, coordination). In Islam, the concept of asceticism is explained by the term "zuhd", asceticism is considered not to be attached to worldly things.

3. Research results:

The word "asceticism" comes from the Greek language and means "practice". According to asceticism, the truth is reached through the ascetic way (lifestyle). In the philosophical part of asceticism, which has a philosophical and religious character, the results achieved through ascetic practices are explained, and the situation in religious asceticism is not analyzed. The idea of asceticism is to find the truth, to reach the Creator, and to be satisfied with the meaning. In order to achieve this idea, each society puts forward different principles. Over time, various schools were formed based on these principles.

Since the elements of asceticism in the teachings of antiquity were connected with primitive religious ideas, asceticism in these religions was superficial. For example, African religions do not show general forms of asceticism. However, man is a supreme being with two natures: physical and spiritual existence. Due to his evil and impure nature, man loses control over his spiritual energy, so now he needs helper deities to approach the Supreme Deity (God), and to achieve this, he uses his evils to harm his body (beating himself, piercing certain parts of his body, cutting, believes that it can be overcome through various ways such as breaking bones, shaving hair, etc.). [2:111] Also, in some tribes, it is believed that the elder (shaman) sings praises to the gods for a long time without ceasing (while beating a small drum rhythmically) and finally communicates with the gods. can get In order to maintain communion with the gods, he is required to observe certain conditions and refrain from forbidden (taboo) foods. [2:111] In some tribes, it is also forbidden to engage in activities other than communion with the gods on certain days. Also, in the Ibibio tribe of Southern Nigeria, during the "Ekong" ceremony of acceptance into the community, all the members of the tribe do not do their daily chores (they must have prepared food and firewood for a certain time in advance), but only engage in prayer to praise the gods and communicate with them. are required to be.[3:63]

Although asceticism exists in many religious teachings, according to its classification, it appears as a unique phenomenon in monotheistic, polytheistic religions and religious-philosophical

teachings. Despite the fact that asceticism as a spiritual practice is present in almost all religions, each of them gives its own meaning and importance to this state (phenomenon).

In Hinduism, which is considered a religious-philosophical doctrine, asceticism is considered the only means of mastering supernatural power and getting rid of the chain of rebirth. Due to the spread of asceticism in Hinduism, it was observed that Brahmin families chose an ascetic way of life, separated from society. According to the fundamental metaphysical concepts of Hinduism, there are four goals of human life, two of which have an ascetic basis (vanaprastha and sannyasi).

In Jainism, asceticism is explained by the term "tapas", that is, tapas means burning. According to Jainism, asceticism is seen as a fire that burns away people's sins. In general, in Jainism, asceticism (tapas) is a powerful practice that cuts the power of karma. Ascetic practices are strongly emphasized. One of its most extreme forms is voluntary starvation. Some ascetics take a vow of silence and may remain silent for years or even for life. Also, constant cold or staying in the sun, standing for a long time, etc. cases are observed. In the Digambara branch of Jainism, ascetic practices are particularly elaborated.

In Jainism, ascetic practices for monks are divided into daily and special rituals. At four o'clock in the morning, monks pray. In this, special prayers, cleansing practices, and meditation are performed. Usually, at ten o'clock in the afternoon, monks should leave the monastery to collect alms and return after collecting alms. It can be said that Jainism did not spread widely because of the strict requirements of ascetic practices.

According to the famous scholar Govinda Lama Anagarika (Ernest Lothar Goffmann, 1898-1985), who studied the ascetic practice in Buddhism within the framework of religious and philosophical teachings, there are three levels of perfection. On the first level, only physical suffering, on the second - a mental state, that is, a person's disillusionment with life, and on the third level, suffering is comprehensive and becomes an integral part of the surrounding existence. [1:49]

At the heart of Buddhism lies the belief in the triad - Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha. Buddha (Siddhartha Gautama) is a shining example of attaining the highest truth. Dharma is the teaching left by Gautama. Sangha is a community of priests founded by the Buddha and still functioning today. In a narrow sense, these are the many saints who attained the "supreme truth" in the past centuries. A person accepted into the Sangha community vows to fulfill the following 10 conditions: 1) not to leave anyone or anything in life; 2) not to lie; 3) not to steal; 4) not to have sex; 5) not to drink intoxicating drinks; 6) not to eat from the afternoon until the next morning; 7) not to adorn the body with more than three pieces of clothing; 8) not to participate in public entertainment and not to participate as a spectator; 9) not to lie on a high and soft place; 10) not using money.

Buddhist monks must renounce worldly claims and possessions and, in addition to the above rules, observe the five precepts: refrain from worldly pastimes (dance, song, and music); (a monk's property should consist of a charity bag, three clothes for clothing, a belt, a needle and a special container for water); not sleeping in comfortable and luxurious beds; eating only from the charity. In addition, the monk must follow 253 moral rules.

All these ethical and ascetic rules in Buddhism are aimed at one goal, first to develop a state of equilibrium of the psyche, full conscious and voluntary control over it, then enlightenment, and then the attainment of nirvana.

Among the monotheistic religions, the phenomenon of asceticism is uniquely manifested in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam.

In Judaism, the first manifestations of ascetic practices are given as taking a vow of celibacy to serve in the temple-skins (Greek: skene-tent, Hebrew: Mishkan-tent of witness) - the first portable synagogue in Judaism). According to researchers, asceticism was not considered an important aspect in the early days of Judaism, but later it acquired significant religious content during the reign of the Roman Empire. In particular, asceticism is manifested in a unique way in the Nazarene, Qumron,

Essenes, and Havur (community belonging to the Pharisees) sects of Judaism. In the community of Qumran, special attention was paid to cleanliness during prayer rituals and communal rituals. The Qumran community claimed to be superior to other Jews. He held positions such as manager, and priest of the team. This team consisted of 10 men (there were also women). There were strict restrictions on the managers of the team. Ascetic practices included fasting, various food restrictions and prohibitions, abstinence from certain actions, and mainly preparation for communion with God.

The ascetic requirements of the Essay community were quite strict, and the members of the community lived and prayed mostly in solitude. Only one day of the week, on Saturday, all the members of the community gathered and performed the prayer ceremony. In this community, there were restrictions on starting a family, as well as specific requirements for voluntary fasting and prayers.

In Judaism in general, the focus on ascetic practices increased significantly in the 70s AD. Researchers interpret this process as related to the destruction of the second temple (tabernacle). It was during this period that the practice of voluntary fasting (except for Pesach) became widespread in Judaism.

In Christianity, the verse "...you shall not eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil..." (Genesis 3:17) from the "Old Testament" (Heb. Kitve Kodesh, Tanakh) of the "Bible" is considered the basis of asceticism.

In Christianity, asceticism is seen as a concept that governs the human will. The main principle of Christian asceticism lies in the spirit of man and the movement of God in the way of fulfilling the commandments, that is, divine and human synergism (cooperation, coordination).

According to Christian teaching, human desire and will alone do not lead to perfection. Emphasizing the interdependence of the human body and soul, it is believed that only divine grace can save, transform, heal, and renew human nature.

In Christianity, the main goal of life is to love God and others: "Jesus said to him: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment, and the second is like it: love your neighbor as yourself" (Matthew 22: 37-40).

While the essence of asceticism is common in Christianity, from a practical point of view there are specific differences in directions. In the orthodox direction of Christianity, asceticism is considered a three-step practice. This view was put forward by one of the famous Greek theologians, Metropolitan Hieropheus (Vlaches). According to him, these three stages are as follows: 1- purification; 2nd enlightenment; 3rd divinity (deification).

the first stage - the verb "kayatsya", which means repentance (pokayanie), has several meanings in Pan-Slavs, such as admitting guilt, punishing oneself, and regretting what one has done. In Greek, this word means conversion, repentance, rebirth, and complete renewal. Also, the concept of passion is important in Orthodox asceticism. According to Metropolitan Hierofey, passion is the last stage of sinfulness, that is, sin is committed in certain stages, through consciousness, desire, realization, and passion. Passion is seen as an iterative process. In Orthodoxy, passion is not an external force, but a force that originates from the person himself, that is, from his heart, damaged, and at the same time in need of renewal. In psychology, this change is called transmodulation. In Christian asceticism, several main types of passion are distinguished: greed, adultery, avarice, anger, sadness, depression, conceit, pride, etc. All these types of passion can be renewed by counter-practice, such as abstinence from covetousness, chastity from adultery, generosity from avarice, anger from gentleness, depression from hope, and pride from humility.

The second stage of Orthodox asceticism is considered to be enlightenment, and it begins with hesychia (Gr. isychia - silence, tranquility, solitude - a Christian mystical worldview, an ancient spiritual practice that forms the basis of Orthodox asceticism). Those who almost (though not

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completely) feel passions go to this stage. Because hesykhia means silence, peace of mind, and soul. At this stage, a person performs two activities: submission of the mind to the soul and unceasing prayer. At the end of the stage of enlightenment, a person is purified and reaches the state of besstrastie - indifference.

The third stage, called divinity, is considered a central doctrine in the life of the Eastern Church and is considered the theological ideal of Orthodoxy.

In the Catholic orientation, there is an attitude to asceticism, as in Orthodoxy, asceticism is a practice consisting of three stages. In "Katekhizis Katolicheskoy Tserkvi"[4:471], asceticism and ascetic practice are emphasized as an integral part of the path of religious life: "The path of salvation is followed by following the Cross. Holiness is not achieved without spiritual struggle and sacrifice. Spiritual ascension requires austerity (abstinence) and the killing of the body that attracts worldly life and passions. Protestantism does not recognize asceticism as a means of salvation for man, but this does not mean that Protestantism rejects asceticism. Protestantism has a unique approach to asceticism, asceticism is one of the ways to regulate the life of adepts (from passion, excesses, and desires).

In Islam, the concept of asceticism can be explained by the term "zuhd" (Arabic: abandoning something, turning away), and those who claim asceticism are called "ascetics" and it is believed that asceticism is achieved through training in the heart and soul.

The dictionary meaning of the word "Zuhd" is interpreted differently in different encyclopedias. For example, according to the definition given in the "Lisonul-arab" encyclopedic dictionary, it is said: "Zuhd is only in the affairs of the world, and it is the opposite of desire and lust for the world." [5:207]

And in the Al-Munjid encyclopedia: "Zuhd is to hate and abandon something. Asceticism in the world means giving up the world for prayer. [6:307-308]

In the literal sense, according to "Al-Mawsua al-Sufiyyah", "Zuhd is to make a soul out of what you can get your hands on." [7:1009] Also, asceticism is one of the main spiritual concepts of Islam. In the dictionary, it means indifference, indifference to material interests, and in a general sense, to be a guest of God's blessings, to renounce the world in order to reach heaven and to renounce worldly pleasures. [8:80]

Zuhd is one of the necessary statuses for a Muslim who wants to make his spiritual education the highest status in Islam, and who wants his level to be great in the Hereafter. According to Surah Shura verse 20 of the Holy Qur'an: "Whoever desires (by his actions) the harvest (that is, the reward) of the Hereafter, We will increase his harvest (harvest) abundantly for him." Whoever wants the crops of the world, We will give him from it (the cloths of the world), and there will be no portion for him in the Hereafter! [9:630]

It is also mentioned in hadiths that the prophet Muhammad (s.a.v) was a leader in asceticism: "A man came to the presence of the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, and said: "O Messenger of God! Make me a witness. When I do it, may God and people love me." Then the Messenger of God said: "Abandon the world, God loves you." They said, "Make austerity from what you have, they will love you" (narration of Ibn Mojah).

According to Islamic scholars, there are three levels of asceticism:

1. Level of the public;
2. Level of properties;
3. Characteristic level.

The different definitions given to zuhd by scholars are related to these levels. Asceticism is one of the great positions in self-education. Status means "standing". Abstaining for a certain period of time and then abandoning it is not considered asceticism. In other words, the owner of the status should always remain fixed in that status, becoming his nature. Only then will there be status.

According to Islam, asceticism (asceticism) in a general sense is attachment to worldly things and not loving them. Not being happy when he comes and not sad when he leaves. Many of the Companions and Salafi Salih were rich and lived like everyone else. But they were hermits in life. Their asceticism was in considering those things as true. Leaving the world of wealth and running away from the position was a means to prevent the love of the world from settling in the heart.

4. Conclusion:

It is appropriate to note the following in the form of a conclusion to the issue:

- the presence of asceticism (as a practice, event, or condition) in all religions and has its own characteristics in different religions;
- from the point of view of belonging to the religious classification, ascetic practices have aspects in common;
- in monotheistic religions, the issue of knowing the Creator and getting closer to Him is the main thing, while in polytheistic, genotheistic religions and religious-philosophical teachings, the spiritual perfection of a person is in the leading place. At the same time, certain differences are observed in all of them, these differences were formed on the basis of the holy books of these religions, the instructions of the founders of the doctrine, and the activities of ascetics (hermits).

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