Gulnora KHUDAYBERGANOVA
INTERNATIONAL ISLAMIC ACADEMY OF UZBEKISTAN, teacher of the department UNESCO Chair in the Comparative Study of World Religions. gulnoraxudoyberganova@iiau.uz, 11, A.Kadiri, Tashkent, 100011, Uzbekistan.

ASCETICISM IN WORLD RELIGIOUS TRADITIONS

Key words: *asceticism, religion, analysis, phenomenon, Buddhism, Christianity, Islam.*

A comparative approach to the study of the phenomenon of asceticism within the framework of the teachings of world religions allows individuals to view the internal features and hidden sections of the ascetic experience (as is) and the mood in them as a state of society.

The ascetic phenomenon, which has existed in the life of society since ancient times, has become an important and sometimes dominant factor in social development. In the twenty-first century it is impossible not to notice the rapid growth of countless associations, organizations, groups and individuals, which directly or indirectly reflect the attachment to the spread of" traditional "and" modern " mystical or mystical-ascetic systems. This factor has a significant impact on the increase of the religious and mystical component in the public consciousness, on the attempt to turn the entire spiritual and social life of the world community into a mystical and ascetic one. The present time is characterized not by random solutions of such problems in different layers of social culture, but by the sustained interest of the entire world community.

This article examines the phenomenon of asceticism in the traditions of World Religions in the field of religious phenomenology, which is one of the branches of religious studies.

Introduction. It should be recognized that all the crisis phenomena of modern civilization, taking place now, are closely related to the anthropological factor, with the inner world of man, with his ideas about himself, about his destiny. The internal crisis of man directly affects all forms of modern culture. From this point of view, it becomes relevant philosophical and religious analysis of what is a mystical ascetic phenomenon, which occupies a significant place in the teachings of world religions, as it can affect the solution of the problems of the crisis facing modern civilization.

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Methods

A comparative approach to the study of the phenomenon of asceticism within the teachings of world religions allows individuals to consider the internal features and hidden sections of ascetic experience (as is) and the mood in them as a state of society.

This question requires a comprehensive study at the intersection of such Sciences as philosophy, cultural studies, theology, anthropology, history and theology. Currently, there are many studies devoted to such problems. Almost all philosophers of antiquity turned to the study of the phenomenon of asceticism.

Literature Review

Many researchers believe that the phenomenon of asceticism is directly related to the teachings of Buddhism. There are a number of studies that support this theory, including the famous foreign researcher E. L. Hoffman, known as Lama Anagarika Govinda, in his work "Fundamentals of Tibetan mysticism" describes the ascetic views of Buddhism as the path of enlightenment.

The phenomenon of asceticism from the standpoint of philosophical and moral aspects studied the following philosophers: B. Spinoza, I. Kent, A. Schopenhauer, F. Nietzsche, W. James, M. Weber.

In particular, W. James cites several types of asceticism: 1) asceticism as "a manifestation of a strong character, satiated with the benefits of life"; 2) asceticism as "the desire of a humiliated spirit to purity"; 3) asceticism as "a sacrifice to God with satisfaction"; 4) asceticism as "self-destruction to get rid of sins according to religious teachings"; 5) Asceticism as "spirituality, inner balance and morality", etc. (*James W. 1993: 234-235*).

M. Weber emphasizes the important ambivalence of asceticism in the dualism of soul and body. He believes that asceticism as an effective means of awakening charismatic abilities grows on the basis of mystical practice, and asceticism arises both in the form of rejection of the world, and in the form of domination over it with the help of mystical feelings.

In the XIX-XX centuries, studies on this topic were Orientalists-specialists: M.Muller, A.Watts,

T.Neldeke, G. Buhler, G. Oldenber, V.P.Vasiliev, V.M. Alekseev. Among the modern researchers on this topic can be identified V. A.Kozhevnikov, E.Torchinov, M.Eliade, D.T.Suzuki.

Well-known orientalist I.Goldtsier shows asceticism as an important eelement of Sufism, and also suggests the separation of two elements in Sufism – zuhd and mystic mysticism. Goldtsier believes that pure asceticism is closer to Orthodoxy Islam, so is its source. Eastern Christianity is the influence of monarchy, Islamic sufism, however, concludes that it is based on an alternative philosophy – initially on the philosophy of newplatonism, and later on the philosophy of Buddhism. (*Петрушевский И.П. 1966:313*).

The main part

Etymologically, the term asceticism is derives from the Greek askesis, originally mean "to train" or "to exercise" specifically in the sense of the training and self-denial that an athlete undergoes to attain physical skill and mastery over the body (Smith 2005, p. 153). However, in the context of this study, asceticism may bedefined as the practice of self-denial, self-abnegation, self-inflicting pains and renunciation etc., for the purpose of achieving a transcendental goal; it is a conscious refinement of the physical, in order to be more accessible to the influence of a higher forces. In other words, it is the shaping of life in accordance with a particular textual and interpretive religious tradition. Asceticism is classified into two types, "Natural asceticism" consisting of a lifestyle where material aspects of life are reduced to utmost simplicity and a minimum but without maiming the body or harsher austerities that make the body suffer, while "Unnatural asceticism" is defined as a practice that involves body mortification and self-infliction of pain such as by sleeping on bed of nails. (Wimbush 2002, pp. 9–10).

Ascetic struggle has two aspects: negative and positive. The negative aspect is sometimes called mortification, purification, or self-denial, and by this is meant the effort to destroy sin and its consequences in human life, to control his evil inclinations, and ultimately to renounce all that may be an obstacle to its growth in the love of God and neighbor. The practice of mortification and self-denial must continue throughout a person's life, because he is always faced with temptations to satisfy his selfish desires and inclinations.

Ascetic practices are used for a variety of purposes. Many religious traditions encourage or require asceticism at periodic or specific times in the religious calendar, usually for purification or preparation for a significant ritual event " (*Smith, 2005, p. 345*). Most religions have at least some practices that can be considered ascetic: fasting, celibacy, seclusion, voluntary or complete abstinence from intoxicants, renunciation of worldly goods and possessions, and in some cases religious suicide.

Asceticism is seen as an essential component for spiritual growth: It encompasses abroad range of practices intended to illuminate vices and inculcate virtue. The forms of asceticism found in the history of religions are manifold. The most common, however, are: renunciation or restriction of nourishment (fasting), sexual abstinence (celibacy), seclusion from society, renunciation of possessions (or at least restriction to the bare necessities), renunciation of everything that might be conducive to joy and in extreme forms self-inflicted suffering (such as flagellation and self-mutilation) (*Fuchs, 2006*). In today's usage, the term describes the exercise of renunciation in one's everyday life, and subordination of all daily living to the dictates of that renunciation. However, the methods of ascetics are quite naturally based upon the necessities of habitual life driven by natural instincts. Human beings variously need or want air, food, water, sleep, sex, clothing and shelter, companionship and status, communication, sense-pleasure, and a sense of identity. Therefore, in order to control these needs, asceticism involves the practices of breath retention, fasting, vigil, continence, poverty including nakedness and homelessness, isolation, silence, endurance of pain, and self-transcendence (*Thurman, 2012*).

In the teachings of the world religions, the phenomenon of asceticism is interpreted in different ways. The basis of the teachings of Buddhism is the liberation of man from the suffering of the world. Suffering brings to man literally everything: «childbirth-suffering, old age-suffering, disease-suffering, death-suffering, associated with illness-suffering, pleasure-separation from suffering, not receiving anything-suffering; in short, five-fold attachment to life is suffering.» In order to get rid of suffering, a person must surrender to asceticism in his life, which will lead him to a state of Nirvana. The Sanskrit word «Nirvana» means «extinction». Nirvana is the inner state of man, in which all feelings and attachments are extinguished, eroded, and the world is perceived through them.

The inner extinction of the senses and physical objects frees man from the torment of the self and the thirst for life, which leads all living beings to an infinite rebirth. Thus the power of karma is abolished and "so illumined that the Immortal absolutely melts away in absolute rest". The soul, therefore, which has lost its identity, must unite with the absolute "nothing". To achieve Nirvana, it is necessary to observe a number of moral and ascetic rules.

Accounts of the Buddha's quest for awakening depict the bodhisattva engaging in ascetic disciplines common to many śramanic groups of his time. The most prominent form of asceticism practiced by the early Buddhist community is the Dhutangas. Theravāda contexts speak of thirteen *dhutaṅga*: wearing patchwork robes recycled from cast-off cloth, wearing no more than three robes, going for alms, not omitting any house while going for alms, eating at one sitting, eating only from the alms-bowl, refusing all further food, living in the forest, living under a tree, living in the open air, living in a cemetery, being satisfied with any humble dwelling, and sleeping in the sitting position (without ever lying down). Mahāyāna texts mention twelve ascetic practices (called *dhutaguṇa*). They are the same as the Theravada list except they omit two rules about eating and add a rule about wearing garments of felt or wool. Several of the thirteen *dhutaṅga* are virtual emblems of the sangha in Theravāda countries. For example, at the end of Theravāda ordination ceremonies, members of the sangha are instructed in the four ascetic customs known as the four "resorts" (Pali, *nissaya*): begging for alms, wearing robes made from cast-off rags, dwelling at the foot of a tree, and using fermented cow urine as medicine (as opposed to more palatable medicines). These four practices, often mentioned in canonical texts, undoubtedly go back to the beginnings of Buddhism in India.

In particular, do not harm any living soul, do not steal, do not commit adultery, do not lie, do not drink alcohol and intoxicating substances. Buddhist monks should renounce worldly claims, property and, in addition to the above rules, observe five commandments: to renounce worldly entertainment (dancing, singing and music); (the property of the monk should consist of a charity mug, three pieces of cloth for clothing, belt, vest, needle and water pipe); not to sleep in comfortable and luxurious beds; eat alms. In addition, the monk must observe another 253 moral rules.

Siddhartha Gautama (C.563–C.483BCE) the founder of Buddhism rejected the ascetic path and pursued what he called the "Middle Path"between the poles of sensuality and asceticism. Thus, Buddhism denies that suchphysical asceticism alone can procure for the practitioner the highest spiritual goals.

However, Buddhism requires its more serious practitioners not only to renounce worldly life but also to train diligently in self-discipline and self-control through the "eight-fold path" these paths include:

1. Right to knowledge;
2. Right to intention;
3. Right to speech;
4. Right to conduct;
5. Right to means of livelihood;
6. Right to effort;
7. Right to mindfulness;
8. Right to concentration.

Hence, it is only through the practice of the eight fold path that one can attain the permanent peace and happiness known as Nirwana, which also require the elimination of desire and aversion through self-discipline and abnegations, though moderation.

All these moral and ascetic rules of Buddhism are aimed at one goal: first to develop a state of equilibrium of the psyche, fully consciously and voluntarily manage it, then to achieve enlightenment (Samadhi), and then to achieve Nirvana.

It is interesting to note that although Buddhism has a very similar ascetic practice to the Christian religion, in fact these two religious teachings are antinomian.

Indeed, in Buddhism there is no understanding of God, personality, immortality of the soul and the Kingdom of Heaven as in Christian teaching. The idea of the existence of the soul, that is, a separate, integral spiritual, is recognized as the root of the worst heresy and all evil.

Christianity is probably the only religion that accepted or incorporated the scriptures of another religion (Judaism), and made it part of its own (Wotogbe-Weneka, 2005, p. 194). Thus, Christian monasticism draws the influence of the Judaic tradition. The "Essence", a Jewish mystical sect, was similar to monks. However, Christianity is said they were founded by Jesus Christ; the religion began in the life, ministry, death and resurrection of the founder, Jesus Christ, and exhibited lots of ascetic practices hence, He commanded thus: If anyone would come after me he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me (Luke 9:23 NIV). Both testaments are rich in example of fasting. Elijah fasted to open himself to God's voice and find direction and strength for himself and the Hebrews. In the New Testament, Jesus was portrayed as one who fasted on extraordinary occasions for the same reasons. It was in this view that Tertullian is quoted to have said: Slanderers flesh will go more easily through the narrow gate of heaven; that "lighter" flesh will rise more quickly; and that drier flesh will experience less putrefaction in the tomb (Bynum, 1995, p 41). In similar view, the Bible book of Luke is quoted to have asserted thus: "John the Baptist came neither eating nor drinking wine, and you say "He has a demon". The Son of man came eating and drinking, and you say, "Here is a glutton and a drunkard" (Luke 7:33-34 NIV). It is therefore not an aberration to say that all Christians are ascetics, as up

until date, Christians continue to practice asceticism through which they claimed to have gotten divine revelation and so on.

The Christian religion teaches men these two truths: that there is a God whom men can know, and that there is a corruption in their nature that makes them unworthy of God. It is equally important to men to know both of these truths, and it is equally dangerous for men to know God without knowing their own wretchedness, and to know their own wretchedness without knowing the Redeemer, who can free them from it. The knowledge of only one of these truths gives rise either to the pride of philosophers, who have known God and not their own wretchedness, or to the despair of atheists, who know their own wretchedness, but not the Redeemer.

In Christianity, asceticism is seen as a concept that governs the will of man. The basic principle of Christian asceticism is the spirit of man and his movement to fulfill the commandments, that is, in the divine and human synergy (cooperation, coordination).

According to Christian teaching, the desire and will of man himself do not lead to perfection. It is believed that only divine grace can save, change, heal and renew human nature, it is argued that the body and spiritual motivation of man are interrelated.

Perfection does not exist in the created nature of man, and therefore it is impossible to achieve perfection by limiting the possibilities that nature has acquired by itself. Perfection is seen only in God himself, in the gift of the Holy spirit. Therefore, asceticism is a tool, a manifestation of freedom and reason only on the way to receiving the gift of God.

In Christianity the main goal of life is to love God and others: "Jesus said unto him, thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart and with all your soul and with all your mind: this is the first and great commandment; the second is like it: love your neighbor as yourself; on these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets" (Heb. Matthew 22: 37-40).

From the point of view of Christian thought, evil arises from a lack of will and desire in the direction of the wrong purpose of the will or the way to achieve the truth in man. Therefore, it is important not to destroy a person's desires, but to educate them.

The Islamic Religion is known as the religion of "allegiance to God". This simply means that man must submit himself unconditionally to the will of God.

In Islam the word asceticism is called "*Zuhd"*. According to Islamic teachings, the soul is the main member of man. If it is healthy, the other organs will be healthy too. If it's broken, then everything else is broken too. The soul serves the rational, spiritual and moral life of man. Human qualities will be located exactly in the heart. These qualities become the main source of actions and various actions originating from a person. Thirty percent of what each person does is from the mind, seventy percent comes from the heart. The soul of man reunites the heart of man with the world, making him a renouncing renegade or an ascetic, awarded. The reward for the work done by The Creator's slave will depend more or less on whether his soul is an outcast or an ascetic.

Thus the reform of the soul was perfected by the full realization of the prescribed actions in the religion of Islam. Khoja Abdulhalik Gijduvani "on this subject is not angry at anything after the formation of the nafs fan in the hermit, there will be an idea in every work, holding the Koran in one hand on the way to truth, the teachings of the Prophet in the second hand, these two lights will go inside (*Navoi A. 2001: 255*)," he says.

The divine interpretation of enlightenment is reflected in the maturation of the soul. The first Sufis divided the human soul into parts, like the seven heavens, in which each part served as a specific process of enlightenment. In particular, fate is the veil of the soul, which protects the soul from satanic temptations and blasphemies.

Abdullah ibn Mubarak r.a, one of the imams of the zahids said:

"The most preferred asceticism is to hide asceticism."

According to the Abdullah ibn Mubarak's view:

"The asceticism is not about making a completely different world, leaving an honest profession and turning away from spending money on good deeds. Rather,

- asceticism is to leave fault.
- asceticism is to leave something suspicious."

The mainstream Islam has not had a tradition of asceticism, but its Sufi-sects-a minority within Islam-have cherished an ascetic life for many centuries (Pew Research 2012, p. 140). Among the Muslim Sufist, the asceticism that they practice focused upon forms of spiritual excess (staying the night in prayer; doing supererogatory actions, machinations) bodily deprivation (fasting, extensive denial of sleep), and embracing holy poverty. That is to say that the Muslim ascetic was the one who embraced contempt of early Muslim elites, dressing in rags, associating with the poor, and performing base occupation (like herding animals, bloodletting and professional mendicancy). Contrary to the assertion that asceticism is limited to the Sufist, this study discovered that, in Islam, a fasting person empties his stomach of all the material things; to fill his soul with peace and blessings, to fill his spirit with piety and faith, to fill his mind with wisdom and resolution. In Ahadith Qudisi; Allah said: Every action

of the son of Adam is given manifold reward for it, he leaves off his desires and for me and I will reward for it, he leaves off his desire for food for me. For the fasting person there are two times of joy; a time when he breaks his fast and a time of joy when he meets his Lord . . . . (Al-Bukhari). Allah further said: Whoever fast during Ramadan out of sincere faith and hopping to attain Allah's reward, then all his past sins will be forgiven (Al-Bukhari). In Islam, fasting, prayers and other ascetic practices are considered obligatory, hence Allah is quoted thus: Woe unto those performances of Sulat (prayers) who delay their salat prayerfrom their slated fixed times and those who do good deeds to be seen of man) (*Quran 107:4–6*)

The most favorable action for ascetics, who constantly push God to be, to live in peace with people and to be with them constantly with good manners, to fly to the desires of lust, not to increase their burdens on the shoulders of people, but on the contrary, to take on their shoulders the "burdens" of people, to resist the desires of the soul.

According to the teachings of the Islamic religion, asceticism (zuhd) in the renunciation of what is necessary for life, and is as follows: 1) Asceticism in food. The ascetic is sufficient to overcome hunger, and is satisfied with food according to his body and prevents himself from enjoying food. 2) Asceticism in clothes. The hermit is content with clothing that protects from heat and cold, and also covers the nakedness. Many hermits are content with ordinary clothes. 3) Asceticism in relation to housing. Some hermits did not settle on their own, but lived in cells (dugouts) and similar places. Others found shelter by building a simple shed. Some ascetics lived under the motto, like Ibrohim Nahai (peace be upon him), who said: "If the dwelling is sufficient, there is no retribution, there is no sin." 4) Asceticism in relation to things. For himself, Zahid did not keep any more equipment than was necessary. 5) Asceticism in relation to wealth. Often the zahids themselves did not accumulate property beyond what was vital. 6) Moral asceticism. The ascetics did not seek the reputation of an ascetic, but the attainment of high morality in their own hearts. The Islamic Ulema, who discussed asceticism, said: "Leaving the worldly is not asceticism. Because in order for a person to be considered an ascetic, it is enough to give up hoarding and endure poverty, and this is very easy to achieve. Many ascetics have easily attained this degree. It's hypocrisy and nothing else." One of the leaders of the ascetics Abdullah Ibn Mubarak (peace be upon him) said: "The most perfect asceticism is the concealment of asceticism." In the words of Abdullah Ibn Mubarak (peace be upon him): "Asceticism does not consist at all in a complete renunciation of the mundane, of the permitted pure profession, of donations for good deeds. But it is to renounce the sinful, the forbidden and the doubtful in one's asceticism. The ascetic renounces the superfluous, the superfluous, even if it is pure and permissible."

Results

From the above points of view, it is possible to cite the following as a general aspect in the traditions of world religions on the subject of ascetic views:

- according to all teachings, the world is conscious with the mind and heart. If the mind is knowledge in the mind, then the divine knowledge is in the soul. The mind and soul fill each other;
- if the first asket (zahid)s were with piety and diet as the main goal, then the next period asket (zahid)s were with intellectual, conscious progress, that is, those who created and made the main goal of understanding and knowing the universe and man;
- the spiritual and moral perfection of the asket (zahid)is contiguous through the addresses of the com, that is, the strict bite is honest, eating less, sleeping less, speaking less, avoiding all indecent deeds, fighting for the purity of language, language and deed, on this basis it is considered the main goal to temper the soul, achieve spiritual tranquility, memory and memorization.

Conclusion

It is discovered that in every religious tradition, the goal of all humans is the re-absorption into the divine essence. This re-absorption has been accomplish through various processes including meditation and contemplation, celibacy, fasting, yoga, self-inflicted pains, as well as complete withdrawal and other ascetic disciplines. Thus, asceticism serves as the gateway through which man experiences and communicates with the ultimate reality. Sequel to this, many founders of different religious traditions have been spiritually enlightened people who had their illumination through such direct experience. But unfortunately, when such illumined individuals were translated into the great beyond, their successors and followers tended to distort the original teachings (practices), and ideas under the influence of political, or economic factors or racial pride or power seeking, self-aggrandisement, inordinate ambition, imperialism or an acculturation drive.

Today, there is a need to study the phenomenon of asceticism not only in relation to the phenomenon of religion, but also to different levels of cultural development and within the framework of logical sections of the teachings of world religions-other socio-cultural phenomena of the spiritual life of

society, for example, in connection with politics. The need to study the tendency of mystical-ascetic views in the teachings of world religions within the framework of the existence of religious cultures allows kengaytirishga the boundaries of philosophical and cultural knowledge. In order to objectively assess the position of religious consciousness at different levels of cultural development of ascetic views in the teachings of world religions, it is necessary to conduct research on the information, social and, of course, cultural character.

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