Abandonment of Passions in Jainism

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Jainism is primarily an ethical system. It is mainly concerned with the ethical problem of removal of misery and suffering. The problem of suffering is bound up with passions, for, the very concept of suffering is taken as spiritual unrest of the transcendental nature arising out of the ego—asserting nature of man. Hence the problem of getting rid of miseries implies the abandonment of passions. Krodha (anger), Māna (egoism), Māyā (hypocrisy), Lobha (greed) are considered to be the basic passions (Kasāya). These are the main forces that held the soul to bondage. The Yoga (activities) moved by Kasāya (passions) attracts the Karmic particles which invade the soul and settle down on it. Thus the Yoga backed by Kasāya is the cause of Āsrava (inflow of karmic particles) and this Āsrava is the cause of bondage.

Really, Yoga is the external condition of bondage, and Kasāya the internal condition of bondage. Hence Yoga tinged with passions can only force the inflow of karmic particles (Āsrava). Without eschewing passion completely, attainment of liberation, the supreme goal of life, cannot be accomplished.

The ideal of passionlessness is as much recognised by Jainism as by its sister religions Brāhmanism and Buddhism. But all approach the problem of getting rid of passions differently and give their own treatment to it.

Buddhism takes this problem purely on ethical plane. Hence it teaches nothing but a mental and moral discipline designed to abondon the egoity, the root cause of passions. It considers the very idea of soul to be the strongest and subtlest form of egoistic clinging. It, therefore, propounds the doctrine of “No-self” which renounces not only phenomenal self altogether but also makes no concession for the transcendental Self. Its approach is absolutely negative without making any room for the positive treatment of it.

Hinduism takes a positive stand in this regard and considers the individual soul ultimately to be an illusion which must be purged from the Higher Self. Thus it insists on the unity of all individual souls in One Supreme Reality which is called theistically God and absolutistically Brahman. It propounds transcendental oneness to do away with egoity and passions.

Jainism avoids both negative and positive philosophical extremes in this regard which give rise to the nihilism in Buddhism and the eternalism in Hinduism. Jainism takes into account negative and positive both and asserts that they are the two sides of the same reality. Negation and position are obtained simultaneously in the real. This truth is Anekāntic (non-absolutist) in its essence. Against the background of Anekantic philosophy, it propounds that on getting uplifted to the transcendental state the soul serves in its full glory denuded of passions. Thus, in affirming what is, it denies what is not. Like the Buddhism it does not favour annihilation of the self but only extinction of personal identity and personal life. Again, like...
the Hinduism it does not prefer the dissolution, of the self into the infinity of Brahman or God, but recommends its upliftment to the most perfect and fully developed state where all the negative ideas of anger, egotism, hypocrisy and greed are completely set aside. Thus according to Jainism passions can be overcome neither by renouncing it altogether nor by unifying it with Absolute or God but by raising and elevating the individual soul to the transcendent state. Jainism avoids the non-entity of the soul on the one hand and unity of the souls on the other hand and accepts the equality of the souls. The eradication of passions is, therefore founded on the principle of equalization and elevation which gives the lofty idea of the peaceful coexistence of liberated souls and reminds us of the Kingdom of ends of Kant.