

An Interview:

Non-possessiveness: The Starting Point Of Nonviolence¹

(Conversation Between Jainendra Kumar and Dr. Nemi Chand Jain)

What is the key to a happy and peaceful life? A brief adaptation of the philosophical exchange between Jainendra Kumar, the eminent Hindi writer, and Dr. Nemi Chand Jain brings out the real meaning of nonviolence, which is generally overlooked by individuals, scholars, monks and Jain institutions. The main problem is the culture of greed, which corrupts the various aspects of our lives, including religion.² - D. C. J.

Dr. Nemi Chand Jain (NJ): What is the seed of nonviolence? Remember, no plant can grow without a seed.

Jainendra Kumar (JK): In my view, those who wish to adopt nonviolence should start with non-possessiveness (APARIGRAH).

NJ: What is an aspect of non-possessiveness that can be grasped by a common man?

JK: Non-possessiveness entails receiving with contentment, that is, one should be content with what one gets. Further, one should perform one's duty and fulfill one's obligations.

NJ: Now the question arises: what is one's duty? How can one figure out one's obligations?

JK: Whatever one believes to be one's duty. The surmise and apprehension of duty does not come from outside. One has to figure it out oneself.

NJ: This implies that one has to place considerable weight on one's own acumen.

JK: Definitely.

NJ: In deciphering one's duty?

JK: Yes.

NJ: You mentioned 'what one gets' which means whatever is given to the person. However, these days, considerable emphasis is placed on 'whatever one gains', which implies making every effort to obtain more, that is, acquisition driven by greed.³

JK: Well this is noteworthy. Our endeavor to get any result is observed to end in success at times and in failure at other times. When we fail, we are disappointed and frustrated on account of greed. Remember, the outcome of one's endeavor - success or failure follows market routine. When one does not obtain the desired fruit in spite of dogged effort, conflict ensues. Desires and circumstances are in discord. Nonviolence cannot exist in such situations. Nonviolence can be fostered only when we have wholesome contentment and dedication to duty.

NJ: One who has needs and who is living with dearth (ABHAAV) is bound to have craving.

JK: The cure for craving arising from wants can be brought about by good thoughts and feelings (SADBHAAV). Auspicious thoughts suppress passions. In the absence of good thoughts, we have desires and wants.

NJ: Will you please clarify auspicious thoughts?

JK: What is auspicious motivates us for spiritual progress. The Sanskrit word 'SAT' means existence. When I accept my worldly existence- reality that life (SAMSARA) is awash with desirable as well as undesirable, desires and wants vanish. Feelings of want imply that I am not happy with my existence - my circumstances. Upon accepting the worldly existence, desires disappear and one becomes content.

NJ: Do frustration and wants go hand in hand?

JK: Not quite, frustration is absence of auspicious thoughts.

NJ: It is observed that these days most people are frustrated.

JK: I agree.

NJ: Then how can there be amity and goodwill?

JK: It is not possible. There can be no amity when there is frustration.

NJ: All problems originate from this situation.

JK: This is what I am arriving at. The problem can be addressed only by avoiding the attitudes that brings about frustration.

NJ: Who will bring about such a circumstance?

JK: The self.

NJ: Your focus is on the individual.

JK: Definitely! In my view, all problems arise from conflicts between our circumstances and our attitude - frame of mind. This is the root cause of tension. We have no control over our circumstances. It is not possible in every situation to resolve our problems by altering the circumstances. We can always endeavor to modify ourselves. This will bring us closer to the solution to the problem. An effort to change the circumstances (others) seldom brings resolution to the problem.

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