

REASON AND FAITH IN JAINISM

Introduction:

Whenever we talk or write about Religion or Indian Religion a lot come to our mind, mainly, concerning the meaning of religion, the need for religion and concerning the inter-religious understanding. Life has been seen as all suffering, all pain and all temporary, "To be free from all these is the goal of our efforts, for only in complete freedom can there be perfection. This effort to attain freedom underlies all forms of worship, whether we know it or not". In fact, We are all striving to reach the same goal: 'Freedom'. With the conception of a perfectly free being, the most essential and the most fundamental conception that comes out is the conception of God. "The embodiment of freedom, the Master of nature, is what we call God. Swami Vivekanand says, "You cannot deny Him. No, because you cannot move or live without the idea of freedom. Whenever there is life, there is this search for freedom and that freedom is the same as God. So, all have one purpose in life: to reach this freedom for perfection." The term 'Religion' could be understood in the etymological sense; which means to gather together. Religion, according to many eminent thinkers of the West is, "worship or adoration of God, "essentially a belief in God or Gods". Or "belief in spiritual beings", "a personal relation with God." etc. The popular religion in India consists of worship of God through prayer, devotion and dedication.

Let us also be clear about the need for Religion. Dr.S Radhakrishnan says, "The world has been shrinking at an increasing pace with the advance of communications and technology.... The need for religion, for a system of thought, for devotion to a cause, which will give our fragile, and fugitive existence significance and value does not require much elaborate argument".¹

Religion we need for more than one reason. Religion, even if not giving clarity to head, certainly gives warmth to the heart that 'love of God will make up for unkindness and that cruelty and failure will give place to love and victory. There are thinkers who see religion as social phenomenon. "For them truth is social unity. Religion is a part of social mechanism with a social purpose, social interest and social hope." This school also feels need for religion if not as worship to God or as path to perfection, at least, as a means to self-culture and social improvement. Every one needs religion because the true religious life, as Dr. S.Radhakrishnan says, "is spiritual certainty offering us strength and solace in the hour of need and sorrow. It is the conviction that love and justice are at heart of the universe, that spirit which gave rise to man will further his perfection."² We need religion for this very faith that cling to us even in our sadness and sorrows. The need for religion, for an individual, for the society as well as for the world, will be there for Everbody's welfare, for everybody's peace and for everybody's gain in spiritual power. Faith is an intrinsic element of human nature. The question is what kind of religion? Is it a religion of love and brotherhood or of power and hate? The question is therefore not, religion or no religion, but what kind of religion?³ Volumes can be written on meaning and need for religion. I just avoid the entire discussion because we want to examine the role of Reason and Faith in religion(s).

RELIGION; EAST AND WEST: Understanding Religion

A long review of history suggests us that there is not much difference about the basic or fundamental essence and nature of life, be it in east or west. It is difficult to define precisely what we

mean by east and west. Even then, keeping the thinkers and philosophers, and their thoughts and philosophy, we find two approaches to reality. The east lays emphasis on the development of the powers of intuition and the west on the faculty of intelligence. The eastern systems are mainly idealistic, spiritualistic, axiological and intuitive. The western systems are mainly rational, intellectual, realistic, scientific and existential. Besides noting these two basic approaches, one should also note that the human mind does not function in fractions or sections. Intellect, emotion and will all spring from the same spiritual fount. In order to understand religion one has to understand the spirit, which is at the core of religion. In other words, understanding spirit is understanding religion. We can say 'Sadhana' is nothing but the process to understand and grasp the spirit. With this we find the use of reason or logic is not eliminated altogether; rather when the rational mind realizes its own limitations, it makes room for the spirit to reveal itself. Concluding the argument we can say understanding reason, intuition, intellect and faith will always help us to understand the religion.

Reason and Intuition :

Reason essentially is a human phenomenon that has a capacity to use universal concepts. Etymologically the word 'Reason' is derived from 'ratio' meaning relation. "In the most generalized sense of all, reason might be defined as the rational element of intelligence."⁴ The thinkers and philosophers use the word reason in a wider sense. Reason is not mere abstract or formal but it is higher and synthetic. It operates through the whole of mind. "It (reason) is the whole mind in action, the indivisible root from which all other faculties arise"⁵ One should also be clear about the difference between the reason and intellect. *Intellect* is abstract and partial. Reason, unlike intellect, is comprehensive and synthetic. Reason is superior to intellect. Reason is a sort of contemplation and is also a principle of the identity of opposites.

Intuition essentially is a subjective experience, and, like reason, is a source of knowledge. Intuition is a higher source of

knowledge than reason. Intuitive knowledge is knowledge by identity; it is the direct knowledge, which is final and supreme. Reason works under the limitations of senses and categories of mind and so fails to fathom the depth of Reality or to realize the Absolute. Intuition is free from all such limitations. It is experienced when one is free from egoistic existence, the ego should disappear and the individual becomes the instrument of the universal.' Intuitive-knowledge, is not non-rational; it is only non conceptual. Intuition is the very base of reason. Intuition is direct and immediate perception. Though there is a seeming opposition between intellect and intuition, and not between reason and intuition; the intuition always needs intellect for the expression, elaboration and justification of its result. Intuition in itself is dumb. Intuition needs intellect; and intellect, on the other hand, presupposes intuition. Intuition often is misunderstood as anti-intellectualism. "Intuition which ignores intellect is useless. The two are not only incompatible but vitally united. Intuition is beyond reason. though not against reason. As it is the response of the whole man to reality, it involves the activity of reason also"⁶

Compatibility of Reason and Faith :

Thinkers in the west held that "some things can be known through Divine Faith which cannot be discovered in any other way, and some things can be known by reason which are not revealed, and some things can be known in both ways,"⁷ Thinkers in East have never thought this way. However, it becomes very important to know the compatibility of Reason and Faith for a better understanding. We all know and accept that some things can be known only by revelation and they are called strict mysteries, "mysteria strict dicta"; they are truths for which no adequate evidence or reason would ever be available. The things which are objects both of reason and faith are those truths which are difficult for men to discover and which are necessary for a man's faith. Such objects common to both faith and reason (eg. The existence of God) are called the "Preambula Fidei" the prerequisites or

preambles of faith. "It is here that the faith is supported by reason, since such doctrines of faith are demonstrated to have rational grounds, and by extension, the whole of the faith is made more credible to one who does not possess."

Yet, both in East and West, there are traditions that held that there are some religious claims, the strict mysteries, which cannot in principle be discovered to be true by means of purely rational investigation. Such claims or such mysteries are unverifiable and unfalsifiable by any purely rational means. In Indian philosophy and also in Jainism both reason and faith are accepted as sources of knowledge. Reason, in fact, is considered essential for Faith. Though faith is considered higher and more important way of coming to knowledge of God, reason is also compatible with faith. In Indian Philosophy and Jainism reason is an important means to support what faith has revealed. This is what we call reason's service to faith. The greatest service reason can offer to divine faith is that of systematic analysis of religious belief and defense against error. This 'certainly does not means that the truth of faith depends upon rational arguments and analysis.

Swami Paramanand in his book titled "Faith is Power" says that faith and reason are not opposed to each other, they supplement each other. One should remember the difference between faith and belief. Belief is superficial and is easily shaken, but faith makes us strong and steadfast. What one requires knowing, in the present world of intellect and intelligence, is that the Faith is not an abstract indefinite sentiment to be put away on shelf. Faith is necessary for us all. Faith is always understood, and should be understood, in its three fold aspects: Faith in one's own self, in humanity, and in God. All these three aspects are interdependent and are not isolated.

Faith is always marvellous, one of the greatest spiritual gifts to mankind, because it gives us direct access to Divinity. Indian Philosophy holds that unflinching faith helps in attaining wisdom, which brings supreme peace. Jainism holds that unflinching faith

(*Shraddhā*) is a *sadhanā*, the devotion that helps attain right vision, which brings salvation. The Sanskrit term "*Shraddhā*" has more comprehensive meaning than English word faith. *Shraddhā* means sense of trust in one's higher self, in that which is more than body and which sustains body.'

But then Reason is also an exclusive gift to mankind, which distinguishes him from all the other living beings. What ever that is Real and has to be accepted as existent though not directly perceived, Reason helps us. The whole Life, the whole Science, the Laws of nature and state and on Reason—on Logic. Majority of the people consider Faith higher than Reason, some consider Faith to be the spiritual development of Reason, Jainism considers both Reason and Faith equally important.

Faith has often been associated to those who are uneducated, ignorant and who have no power to think and investigate. This is misunderstanding faith as a blind baseless belief. Faith, in fact, is never well founded until it is based on experience. Realization is the basis of all true faith."

One cannot have faith without optimism. Faith and hope are inseparable. Actually all men have the elements of faith in them. Faith is absolutely necessary for spiritual growth.

The Tattreya Upanisad (chapter 3) says, "There has been a steady ascend from the inorganic to organic, from the organic to the sentient, from the sentient to the rational life. The rational has to grow into the Spiritual which is as far above the purely rational as the rational is above the purely sentient."

Both Faith and Reason are, as we have said earlier, supplementary to each other, strong pillars, in unity, to lead an enlightened state of soul.

REASON AND FAITH IN JAINISM :

The scholastic and neo-scholastic tradition in the west were always concerned with religion but not with "religion" in the abstract. The main tendencies (approaches) amongst the scholastic

thinkers were (i) the distaste for dialectical analysis, (ii) emphasis upon innate traces of God in the soul of man, and (iii) the claim that no one is really an atheist and that all moral experience is grounded in an inbred consciousness of the person of God. J. F. Ross, in discussing the salient characteristics of this approach to religion, discusses 'Faith and Reason' in great details and fundamentally. Its approach statement is "BOTH THE ACTIVITY OF FAITH AND THE ACTIVITY OF REASON ARE ALWAYS OF ARRIVING AT KNOWLEDGE. This has a substantial and important claim: Both faith and reason are ways of arriving at knowledge of God and God's will for men."¹⁰

When we consider Jain scriptures and its canonical works the question would be, do they consider faith to be a source of anything more than belief or opinion? In Jainism, it is not so. Let us see how. The term "belief, in general, and particularly in religion and religious texts functions in many ways. Belief in Jainism is often designating 'a state of adherence' to a preposition or to a way of life, to a state of opinion or a state of knowledge. Jainism has always tenaciously insisted that faith is not merely a source of knowledge but of vision too. In Jainism, though faith (*shraddhā*) is a state, it is also an activity. According to Jain scriptures, "friendliness (*Maitri*), activity (*Pramoda*), compassion (*Karunā*) and neutrality (*Madhyasma*) are four qualities basically required in the foundation of religion."¹¹ Shri Haribhadra Suri gives a great importance to equanimity or right faith (*Samyakkarma*). According to him, the right faith has five inevitable attributes.

These are (1) recitation of verses (*Sutrokti*), (2) Concentration of mind while worshipping (*Upayoga*), (3) doubtlessness (*Asanka Tyāga*), (4) equanimity (*SamyakDrsti*), and (5) devotion (*bhakti*)

So according to Jaina concept of *Sāadhanā* (religious activity) right faith is the foundation.

In one of the canonical works of Jainism, *Bhaktirasam* it abindu ? 1 & 2 the *Aradhanā* or *Sāadhanā* consists of ten activities, of which the very first is 'faith' (*Śraddha*). Thus we find faith, both

as a state and as an activity, has its own place in the wider structure of *Aradhanā* or *Sādhanā*, in Jainism.

Faith, with reference to religion, is divided into human faith and divine faith. Since Jainism insists on earning or developing higher state of soul through austerities and thus purifying the soul from karma, there is no scope of Grace or faith in Grace of God. In this sense the faith, in Jainism, is an inevitable requirement to attain higher state of soul (higher *Gunsthāna*). In Jainism, perhaps the only religion, we find this activity of accepting authoritative testimony and canonical works as the activity or exercise of 'human faith'. If "Divine faith" is an activity which means the accepting of certain propositions upon the authority of God or as commitment to the truth of some proposition because it has been revealed by God (or *Tirthānkara*) then we can say we do have 'divine-faith' in Jainism.

Reason is a source of knowledge. "It is, on one hand, a denial of philosophical skepticism, and on the other, an adherence to the doctrine of moderate empiricism."¹³ More than knowing what is reason, it is important to know what is meant by "knowing by reason". Knowing by reason is a very broad concept closely akin to finding out for oneself¹⁴ Almost all religions agree and accept that reason is a way of coming to knowledge of God. Jainism gives equal importance to Vision (through faith), Reason and Conduct to attain the highest state of spirituality. The real and deep understanding of Jain Philosophy of non-absolutism, the theory of manifoldness and *Nayavāda*, and the entire science of karma (*Karmavāda*) bring us right into the inner core of Reason based Jainism which is also ethical, religious and theistic in colour.

Jainism, as philosophy and thought, is a realistic system. It accepts the outer world as a real and as since beginningless time (*anādi*). Even the deepest meanings; the noblest, and the most profound principles of Lord Mahavira are all based on reason. In fact, in Jainism one finds every 'morality' talk, full of 'rationality'.

According to Jainism knowledge is one of the attributes of soul. Jainism maintains that our knowledge of things and of their relations starts from experience and reason can at best serve to organize it. The Jain theory of knowledge admits two kinds of knowledge: mediate i.e. '*Paroksa*' and immediate i.e. '*Aparoksa*'. The mediate knowledge classified into *Mati* (ordinary - cognisivism) and *Sruti* (testimony) are Reason based while the immediate knowledge classified into *Avadi* (direct Knowledge of things) *Manahparyāya* (direct Knowledge of thought of others) and *Kevala* (perfect knowledge) are intuition based. The Jain epistemology includes induction based on observation and deductive reasoning. What is most remarkable to note is that a Jain does not believe in the a-priori validity of the laws of thought. To him the laws are "the laws of reality and therefore can be discovered by experience only".

Reason and Faith, in our final conclusion, with reference to Jainism, are both significant and important. Both Jaina canonical literature and Jaina scholars held (i) that faith is a source of *Sadhana*, an effective activity towards wider knowledge and in particular a source of knowledge about Soul and Matter, (ii) that reason, is also a source of knowledge in two ways - (a) in an experimental, personal and direct way and (b) in a scientific, impersonal and arguments based upon self evident reasoning.

Let us understand Jainism in a nut-shell. According to Jainism it is the human soul alone which can regain the highest degree of perfection. And that all souls are possessed of fullness and perfections. "The infinite is inherent in the finite. That is why the finite is ever struggling to break down its finiteness and reach out to the fullest freedom"¹⁵. Jainism, uniquely maintains that God is only the highest, noblest and fullest manifestation of the power which lie latent in each soul. What one requires is to put utmost self effort to defeat one's own enemies: passions and sense cravings, like, a true warrior. "Fight with yourself. Why fight with external foes ? He who conquers himself, through himself will obtain

happiness”¹⁶ The self effort is an effort to attain the unity of Right Reason (*Samyak Jnan*), Right Vision (*Samyak darsana*) and Right Conduct (*Samyak caritra*). It gives emphasis on Reason and Faith both, on *Anekanta* and *ahimsa* both. Jainism wants understanding and trusting both involved in practicing the religion, and that is self-effort. Jainism, philosophically (rationally) is realistic, in the sense it accepts the objects of the world as real; but by nature Jainism is *Acarpradhana*, in the sense that it is highly ethical and accepts Faith as inevitable in self-effort (in *Sadhana*). Jainism as an important, fully developed and well eshtablished religious and cultural system, possesses the elements of Reason and Faith both. The entire Jain religion and its theology and mythology is Faith, its metaphysics, its logic and doctrine of Karma is Reason; and yet Jainism is an unique unity of theology, mythology and philosophy; a unique unit of Reason and Faith.

In Jainism, the emphasis is on the unity of faith, knowledge and conduct. The Jain religion is certainly a rational religion and at the same time the ‘worship’, rituals, facts and festivals reveal the element of faith in it. Dr. J.P. Jain, says that, “the basic spirit of Jainism is ‘to live and let live’, to live a life of understanding, tolerance, sympathetic cooperation, and peaceful coexistence, may, the still fuller and nobler corealisation.”¹⁷ A student of Jain philosophy, after the study of its metaphysical doctrines and the presuppositions, its ethics and its philosophy of soul; its theory of knowledge and non-absolutism (*Sayādvāda & Nayavāda*), its logic and law of Karma; its theistic colour, and popular belief and *sadhana* - after a thorough study of these all, finds Jainism both, highly rational and at the same time, highly theistic with deep faith and high spirituality. In Jainism, as *Tattvarthasutra* says the right faith, right knowledge and right conduct is the way to liberation, we find the unity of reason, faith and conduct. At the same time, if we study the entire way to attain liberation we find, in Jainism, it is the rational that grows into the spiritual. It would not be proper to say that in Jainism the reason is considered lower and faith

higher or superior. In fact, in Jainism, both reason and faith enjoy equal importance and equal significance. It will not be wrong to say that the secular spirit of Jain religion and thought; and the concept of polluted soul to be purified to attain salvation through highly moral and ethical system poses before us a unique unity of reason and faith. Jainism brings about both the rational understanding and the spiritual realization.

CONCLUSION:

In our final conclusion we will say that both reason and faith are considered in Jainism as ways to attain the salvation, as both are required for spiritual progress. Again, unlike some schools, Jainism does not consider reason to be inferior and faith to be superior. According to Jainism both are fundamentally and inevitably, required for better understanding and higher spirituality. It will not be wrong to say that in Jainism we find the rational grows into the faith, which is far above everything. The reason and faith, thus in Jainism enjoy equal status and always remain as an intrinsic element of one who follows it. Moreover, the rationalism of Jainism does not close the doors to save knowledge by wisely accepting intuition as a source of valid knowledge. For such a highly rational system, scientific support to intuitively certain metaphysical truths, is nothing more than an additional confirmation. Jainism's 'Reason' is not "lower or uncritical rationality" because the development of critical rationality resulting in morality and spirituality -resulting into Faith, is at the core of Jain religion and philosophy.

Notes:

1. Dr. S Radhakrishnan. "Religion and culture", Orient Paperback, Delhi 1968 - p. 7&8
2. Dr.P.Nagaraja Rao and others(Ed.) "Radhakrishnan Reader-an Anthology, Bhartiya Vidya Bhavan 1988. P 435
3. Dr.S.Radhakrishnan, 'Religion and Culture', Orient Paperback, Delhi 1968, p. 10
4. Hasting James (Ed) 'Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics', p. 125
5. Dr. S Radhakrishna, "An Idealist View of Life" p. 134
6. See: 'Contemporary Indian Philosophy', George Allen and Unwin, London 1952 page 486-87
7. J. F. Ross, "Religion in Neo-Scholastic Tradition" an Essay in "Religion in Philosophical and Cultural Perspective" (Ed) J. Clayton Fearer and William Harsoz 1971, p.117
8. Ibid pp. 129
9. Swami Paramananda, 'Faith is power' Advaita Ashram, Calcutta, 1998 p.p.37
10. Ross J.F., "Religion in Neo Scholastic Tradition" p.p. 121
11. Sri Haribhadrasuri, 'Lalit Vistara' Vol I, commentary by Sri Bhanuvijayaji pp 20
12. The Ten Activities are faith (*Shraddhā*), holy communion (*satsanga*), eulogy or religion song (*stavan or bhajan*), renunciation (*Nivriti*), Sincerity (*Nistā*), special interest (*Ruchi Visesa*), firmness (*Dradha Anuraga*), love (*Pramotpatti*), emotional stat (*Bhāvanubhuti*) and strong devotion (*Parā Bhakti*)
13. J.F. Ross - 'Religion in Neo Scholastic Tradition' pp. 120
14. Ibid pp. 120
15. Dr. S.Radhakrishnan, 'Indian Philosophy' Vol I pp. 399
16. 'Uttaradhyayan Sutra' IX 35
17. Dr.J.P.Jain, "Religion and culture of Jains" Bharatiya Jnanpith Publication, New Delhi 1977 pp. 102,103

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