

Faith (*Śraddhā*), Reason (*Tarka*) and Wisdom (*Prajñā*):

Their Nature, Dynamics, and Praxis in the Indian Classical Traditions

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Abstract: This paper explores the sangama (confluence) of *śraddhā* (faith), *tarka* (reason) and *prajñā* (wisdom) in the Indian classical traditions. Each concept is seen from the aspects of its nature, dynamics and praxis in Hinduism, Buddhism and Jainism. These three concepts are seen also in their mutual relatedness and the need for their integration in the journey of discovering the truth of the ultimate reality and its realization. In the concluding part the advaitic model of *śravaṇa* (listening faith), *manana* (faith assisted reasoning) and *nididhyāsana* (experiential wisdom) is proposed for enabling the integration of *śraddhā*, *tarka* and *prajñā*. Finally we reflect on the implications of this discovery for the philosophical and theological formation in India.

Keywords: faith, reason, wisdom, Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, dynamics of integration

Introduction

We can begin the presentation of this theme in the spirit of what Pope John Paul II said in the encyclical *FIDES ET RATIO*:

My thoughts turn immediately to the lands of East so rich in religious and philosophical traditions of great antiquity. Among these lands India has a special place. A great spiritual impulse leads Indian thought to seek an experience which would liberate the spirit from the shackles of time and space and

would therefore acquire absolute value. The dynamic of this quest for liberation provides the context for great metaphysical systems. In India particularly, it is the duty of Christians now to draw from this rich heritage the elements compatible with their faith, in order to enrich Christian thought (*Fides et Ratio*, 1998: no.72)

This paper explores the saṅgama of *śraddhā* (faith), *tarka* (reason) and *prajñā* (wisdom) in the Indian classical traditions. Each concept is seen from the Hindu, Buddhist and Jain perspectives. In the concluding part the integration of these is seen in the practice of *śravaṇa* (listening faith), *manana* (thinking faith) and *nididhyāsana* (experiential faith) as proposed in the *advaita Vedānta* for realizing the ultimate truth. We will also reflect on the implications of this for philosophical and theological formation in India.

1. Śraddhā(Faith)

Etymologically ‘*śraddhā*’ is derived from the root ‘*śrat*’ (heart) and ‘*dhā*’ (to place). Hence the word means placing one’s heart or confidence in something. ‘*śrat*’ is linguistically related to ‘*credo*’ (Latin) and ‘*kardia*’ (Greek) which once again means something to do with the heart (Panikkar, 1983: 398). According to the *Nirukta* of Yāska ‘*śrad*’ is truth (9.30). Further ‘*śrat*’ also means ‘to relax’, ‘to rest’ indicating faith enabling ultimate rest in the Being. ‘*śraddhā*’ has meaning of longing of a pregnant woman indicating her longing and confidence that new life will spring from her (Panikkar, 1983: 398).

1.1 Vedic Faith

In the Vedas ‘*śraddhā*’ is neither just intellectual assent nor blind trust. It is the quality of the full human being. It refers to the basic ground or matrix from which all actions and decisions spring. A person’s depth and convictions are expressions of faith. Faith is all pervasive. “Faith wraps the gods, faith wraps this whole world” (*Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa*: 2.8.8.8). *Śraddhā* is closely tied with *Ṛta* (cosmic harmony). According to the *Upaniṣads* it is the *sine qua non* for approaching the Guru for emancipatory knowledge (Panikkar,

1983: 178-180). The following Vedic texts highlight the rich meanings of ‘śraddhā’.

A. Śraddhāhaviḥ (Rgveda 10.151.1, 4, 5)

1. By faith is fire kindled.

By faith is offered sacrifice.

Sing we now faith, the pinnacle of joy.

4. The Gods, led by the Spirit,

Honor faith in their worship.

Faith is composed of the heart’s intention.

Light comes through faith.

5. Through faith men come to prayer, Faith in the morning,

Faith at noon and at the setting of Sun.

O Faith, give us Faith.

B. Chāndogya Upaniṣad 1.1.10

What one performs with knowledge, with faith, with meditation, that, indeed, becomes more effective.

Chāndogya Upaniṣad 7. 19-20

19. When a man has faith, then he thinks. Nobody thinks until he has faith.

20. When a man perseveres, then he has faith. No one has faith without having perseverance.

C. Taittirīya Upaniṣad 1.11.3

Give with faith, give nothing without faith.

D. Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad 3.9.21

On what is faith based?

On the heart, for through the heart one knows faith.

In fact, on the heart alone is faith based (Panikkar, 1983: 180-181).

1.2 Faith in the Bhagavadgītā

In the *Gītā* faith is praised as a person’s very identity. As the person’s faith so the person (17.3). Faith is the requirement for obtaining knowledge (4.39). “The most basic requirement of the path of devotion is faith (śraddhā), a necessity that is tied to a

willingness to surrender oneself completely to God and to become totally attached to Him” (Olson, 2007: 125). The following text brings out the kinds of faith.

The faith of every man, O Arjuna, accords with his nature. Man is made up of faith; as is his faith, so is he. The threefold austerity (of body, speech and mind) practiced with faith by men of balanced mind, without any expectation of reward, is said to be pure. Without faith, whatever offering or gift is made or work done or penance performed, it is reckoned “not-being” both now and hereafter (17.3.28).

Ultimately in the *Bhagavadgītā* faith is experienced as a loving surrender to the Lord and it is strongly tinged with *bhakti* (Panikkar, 1983: 180). One who doubts will have neither this world, nor the next, nor joy (4.40).

1.3 Faith in the *Vedānta*

According to Śaṅkara the aspirant should have the virtue of faith along with discernment (*nitya-anitya-vastu-viveka*), detachment (*vairāgya*), virtues beginning with mental control (*śamadamadhi*) and an ardent desire for liberation (*mumukṣatva*). ‘Faith’ here has so wide a meaning as to include faith in oneself, Guru, the sacred scriptures and God. Faith is the conviction held in a peaceful mind that it is like that, namely that the *śāstra* teaching regarding the Brahman as innermost Atman is incontrovertibly true (*citta-prasāda-āstikyabuddhi*): such a faith precedes and imitates all the efforts of a man towards his goal (Mu.U.Bh.2.1.7). When there is faith, the mind becomes concentrated upon the subject which it desires to comprehend, and then due comprehension follows (Ch.U. Bh.6.12.2). And perfect faith is no longer merely an intellectual assent but a surrender of the whole mind; it is *buddhi* coupled with *bhakti*; more precisely, it is *āstikya-buddhir-bhakti-sahita*, i.e., conviction of existence of Brahman-atman accompanied with devotion (Br.U. Bh.3.9.21) (Ivo, 2013: 148).

For Rāmānuja faith is intimately connected with *bhakti* which culminates in *prapatti* (complete surrender as expressed in the

caramaśloka of the *Bhagavadgītā*, 18.66). After Rāmānuja this tradition gave rise to famous ‘cat’ (*mārjāla*) and ‘monkey’ (*markaṭa*) theological perspectives based on whether the importance should be given to human effort or grace in realizing salvation.

Madhva’s approach to faith is influenced by his notion of five-fold differences and the supremacy of Viṣṇu, the sole independent principle. Faith in Viṣṇu should be practiced with the knowledge of the greatness of the Lord. In the journey of faith, Guru’s role is very important.

1.4 Buddhism

In Buddhism, faith is closely allied with the four noble truths, the eight-fold path, the cardinal teachings of impermanence (*sabbam khaṇikam*), no-soul (*sabbam anattam*) and the theory of dependent origination (*pratītya-samutpāda*) and the three jewels: Buddha, *Dhamma* and *Saṅgha*. Buddhism is a religion of self-help. The following texts express various dimensions of faith.

A. At this time the world-honored one serenely arose from meditation and addressed *Shariputta*: “The wisdom of all the Buddhas is infinitely profound and immeasurable. The portal to this wisdom is difficult to understand and difficult to enter. Neither men of learning nor men of realization are able to comprehend it.” (Lotus Sūtra 2)[Wilson, 1993:56].

Here men of learning are the shravakas who rightly understand the Theravada teaching and attain arhatship. Men of realization are *pratyekabuddhas* who attain enlightenment through solitary effort and meditation. This sutra was composed in a period of rivalry among the various schools of Buddhism. The Buddha goes on to say that the only way to enter the door is by faith (Wilson, 1993: 56).

B. By faith you shall be free and go beyond the world of death (Wilson, 1993:537).

C. There are four kinds of faith. The first is the faith in the ultimate source. Because of this faith a man comes to meditate with joy on the principle of suchness. The second is the faith in the numberless excellent qualities of the Buddha. Because of this faith a

man comes to meditate on them always, to draw near to them in fellowship, to honor them and to respect them, developing his capacity for goodness and seeking after the all-embracing knowledge. The third is the faith in the great benefits of the Dharma. Because of this faith a man comes constantly to remember and practice the various disciplines leading to enlightenment. The fourth is faith in the *Saṅgha*, whose members are able to devote themselves to the practice of benefitting both themselves and others. Because of this faith a man comes to approach the assembly of Bodhisattvas constantly and with joy to seek instruction from them in the correct practice (Wilson, 1993: 537).

1.5 Jainism and Faith

According to Jainism, the three jewels together work towards the difficult path of liberation. They are: right faith (*samyak darśana*), right knowledge (*samyak jñāna*) and right conduct (*samyak cāritra*). *Tattvārthasūtra* (1.1) says: Right belief, right knowledge, right conduct, these together constitute the path to liberation (Wilson, 1993: 536). *Uttarādhyaṇa sūtra* (28.30) echoes the same view:

Without faith there is no knowledge, without knowledge there is no virtuous conduct, without virtues there is no deliverance, and without deliverance there is no perfection [nirvana] (Wilson, 1993: 536).

Here faith means believing in the veracity of the teachings of the tīrthaṅkaras. Knowledge is the understanding of complex and pluralistic reality through the *nayas* and *pramāṇas*. The practice of the five great vows (*ahiṃsā*, *satya*, *asteya*, *brahmacarya* and *aparigraha*) are important virtues stressed in Jainism.

2. *Tarka* (Reason)

2.1 Hinduism

The role of reason (*tarka*) in searching for the truth is not overlooked. We read in *Bṛahadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*, 2.4.5: “One’s self must be seen, must be heard, must be reasoned about, must be meditated on.” Kauṭilya, in his *Arthaśāstra*, praises critical inquiry:

Investigating by means of reasons, good and evil in the Vedic religion, profit and loss in the field of trade and agriculture, and prudent and imprudent policy in political administration, as well as their relative strengths and weaknesses, the study of critical inquiry (*ānvīkṣikī*) confers benefit on people, keeps their minds steady in adversity and in prosperity, and produces adeptness of understanding speech and action. The study of critical inquiry is always thought of as a lamp for all branches of knowledge, a means in all activities, and a support for all religious and social duty (Ganeri, 2008: 413).

A systematic attempt to rigorously apply reason takes place among the Nyāya thinkers. The Navya-nyāya particularly is a *pramāṇasāstra*, a compendium of logic and logical arguments; an epistemology built upon a technical methodology of analysis that is unparalleled in subtlety and accuracy (Mazumdar, 1999: 54). Nyāya advocates a model for this inquiry in treating inference in an intricate manner. It consists of five limbs (*avayava*) making the compact structure of a logical reasoning. The first step is the statement of the thesis, the second the statement of reason or evidence, the third citation of an example (a particular case, well recognized and acceptable to both sides) that illustrates the underlying general principle and thereby supports the reason or evidence. The fourth is the showing of the present thesis as a case that belongs to the general case. The fifth is the assertion of the thesis again as proven or established. Here is the time – honored illustration:

Step 1. There is fire on the hill.

Step 2. For there is smoke.

Step 3. (Wherever there is smoke, there is fire) as in the kitchen.

Step 4. This is such a case (smoke on the hill).

Step 5. Therefore it is so, i.e. there is fire on the hill (Matilal, 1998: 4).

Tarka is generally translated as reason, argument, logic, discussion, proof, contention, conjecture, reflection, refutation, and the making of inferences. The word is primarily used in contexts where competing positions are defended against other views. The focus here lies more on the identification and classification of irregularities, inconsistencies, or fallacies within scholarly debates;

speculative doctrines, or philosophical systems. *Tarka vidya* or *tarkaśāstra* is the science of inductive reasoning and thought (Quack, 2012: 628).

Debates in Akṣapāda's view can be of three types:

- i. An honest debate (called *vāda*) where both sides, proponent and opponent, are seeking the truth, that is, wanting to establish the right view;
- ii. A tricky debate (called *jalpa*) where the goal is to win by fair means or foul; and
- iii. A destructive debate (called *vitaṇḍā*) where the goal is to defeat or demolish the opponent, no matter how.

The first employs logical arguments and proper evidence to establish a thesis. Normally the participants were teacher and students of a particular tradition. The second was in fact, a winner-takes-all situation. Tricks, false moves were allowed. It took place between two teachers of different schools. In the third type there was mere refutation without establishing any position. It was destructive and negative (Matilal, 1998: 2-3). Hence in the words of Matilal, "verification and rational procedure are as much part of Indian Philosophical thinking as they are in western philosophical thinking." (Matilal, 1971: 11).

While Indian Philosophical thinking treasured reason, it was also very much aware that reason can also be abused, as we shall see in the last section.

2.2 Buddhism

Buddha and Buddhism advocate strongly the use of reason. The disciples were told by Buddha to use their discretion. We can gauge this spirit in the following texts.

A. So, Ananda, you must be lamps unto yourselves,.. Rely on yourselves, and do not rely on external help. Hold firm to the truth as a lamp and a refuge, and do not look for refuge to anything besides yourselves (*Dīgha Nikāya* ii. 99-100, Warren, 1896).

B. Do not be misled by reports, or tradition, or hearsay. Be not led by the authority of religious texts, nor by mere logic or inference, nor by considering appearance, nor by the delight in speculative opinions, nor by seeming possibilities, nor by the idea: “This is our teaching.” But when you know for yourselves that certain things are unwholesome and wrong, and bad, then give them up...And when you know for yourselves that certain things are wholesome and good, then accept them and follow them. (*Aṅguttara Nikāya*, i. 190-191-Keśaputta sutta, Walpola, 1974).

Nāgārjuna (150 CE), a creative and brilliant Mādhyamika philosopher radically critiques the metaphysical and epistemological speculations of the rival schools with a rational method known as *prasaṅga* or *reductio ad absurdum*. He demonstrates vigorously that perceptions about reality involve self-contradiction (Gupta, 2009: 30).

Brahmajālasutta mentions sixty-two views as products of *tarka* which may be subsumed under the following ten headings:

1. The world is eternal.
2. The world is non-eternal.
3. The world is finite.
4. The world is non-finite.
5. The soul is identical with the body.
6. The soul is different from the body.
7. The *tathāgata* exists after death.
8. The *tathāgata* does not exist after death.
9. The *tathāgata* both exists and does not exist after death.
10. The *tathāgata* neither exists nor does not exist after death (Gupta, 2009: 43)

These ten are rejected because they are based on pure reasoning and not on direct personal knowledge and experience. Ambedkar, in modern times, followed the spirit of rationalism and interpreted *Dhamma* to the situation of the dalits in his famous “Buddha and His Dhamma”.

2.3 Jainism

Jainism rejects the authority of the Vedas and advocates asceticism. It follows the spirit of self-reliance and non-violent ethics. With its famous *syādvāda* Jainism proclaims utmost intellectual democracy and tolerance of opposing and contradictory views. The seven predications about a knowledge event illustrate the complex and complementary nature of reality. The supreme principle of non-violence manifests in the metaphysical, epistemological, ethical and religious realms. Extolling reason, Haribhadra says: I am not biased in favor of Mahāvīra, nor averse to Kapila or other teachers. I am committed to the preaching that is truly rational (Haribhadra, *Lokatattvanīrnaya* 38, 1976).

One important area where reason or *tarka* makes its impact is the mutual refutation between theists and non-theists in regard to the existence of God. We have famous nine proofs for God's existence in Udayana's *Nyāyakusumāñjali*. Even within the *āstika* systems *mīmāṃsā* and *sāṃkhya* are atheistic. Among the *nāstika* schools *cārvāka* and Jainism offer vigorous critique of theism. In a way atheism and rationalism are not opposed to Hinduism. The founder of Hindutva movement, Savarkar (1883-1966) publicly announced his atheism and rationalism because "Hinduism" was more a marker of cultural and political identity to him (Quack, 2012: 632).

3. *Prajñā* (Wisdom)

3.1 Hinduism

Indian Philosophy, known as '*darśana*', by its very nature demands going beyond reason to realize the ultimate truth. In the *Upaniṣads* this is termed as '*parāvidyā*.' When Uddālaka was asking young Śvetaketu whether he knows that thing by knowing which he knows everything, he was referring to wisdom learning. The *Kena Upaniṣad* describes this situation well: He truly knows Brahman who knows as beyond knowledge; he who thinks that he knows, knows not. The ignorant think that Brahman is known, but the wise know him to go beyond knowledge (Wilson.1993:56). Describing the limited character of human knowledge Ṛgveda (1.164.45) says:

The word is measured in four quarters. The wise who possess insight know these four divisions. Three quarters concealed in secret, cause no movement. The fourth is the quarter that is spoken by men (Wilson, 1993: 576). Interpreting the *Ṛgveda Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad* (4.8) comments:

He who does not know that indestructible Being of the *Ṛgveda*, that highest ether like self-wherein all the gods reside, of what use is the *Ṛgveda* to him? Those only who know It rest contented (Wilson, 1993: 575). Surprisingly *Aitareya Āraṇyaka* (2.3.2) has characterized human beings as endowed with intelligence-*prajñā* (Halbfass, 1991: 269).

The *Bhagavadgītā* has highlighted the significance of wisdom in the following verses.

As the heat of a fire reduces wood to ashes, the fire of knowledge burns to ashes all karma. Nothing in the world purifies like spiritual wisdom. It is the perfection achieved in time through the path of yoga, the path which leads to the self within (4.37-38).

This is true knowledge: to seek the self as the true end of wisdom always. To seek anything else is ignorance (13.11).

The concluding verses of the second chapter of *Bhagavadgītā* give a beautiful profile of the person of steady wisdom known as *Sthitaprajña*. We shall allow these verses to speak for themselves.

Person of steady wisdom (2. 55, 56, 57, 58, 68, 69, 70, 71)

55. The Lord of Śrī said: O Pārtha, one who having renounced all desires born of the mind, is satisfied in the self and by the self, is said to be one whose insight is steady.

56. In the midst of suffering and happiness his mind is neither confused nor kindled. He who is free from desires, passions, fear, and anger is said to be a sage of tranquil mind.

57. One who is free from all material desires, who is neither delighted nor disturbed by joys and sorrows is the one who stands firm in wisdom.

58. And when he completely controls his senses and keeps them away from their objects, like a tortoise drawing its limbs within its shell, his wisdom stands steady.

68. Therefore, O mighty-armed, one whose senses are completely withdrawn from sense objects, is the one fixed in wisdom.

69. That which is dark for all sentient beings appears like bright daylight for those whose senses are controlled. That which is dawn for sentient beings appears like the dark night for the introspective sage, who sees.

70. Just as many rivers entering the ocean cannot stir or disturb its stillness similarly, the mind of a person who is unmoved by desires remains still and attains peace. The one who hankers after such desires does not attain peace.

71. The action of a person who has abandoned all desires is free from desire. Indifferent to ownership or sense of possession and free from any sense of ego, he attains peace.

3.2 Buddhism

Buddha, the enlightened one, stresses the need for wisdom in his teachings. The eight-fold path is classified under *prajñā*, *śīla* and *Samādhi*. In early Buddhism, *prajñā* (intuitive insight) represents the highest activity of the mind. Intuition and intellect are not two opposed methods of grasping reality, for only a comradeship between the two can help us in the knowledge of reality as it is. According to Mahayana tradition there is no wisdom without compassion. The one who would attain to enlightenment must have a profound compassion for all sentient beings. He or she must love the poor and the sick and the afflicted and must share in their sorrows. Furthermore, compassion does not end with material help. The compassionate person desires the salvation of all, even refusing to enter into nirvana until all sentient beings are saved. Compassion leads to wisdom just as wisdom leads to compassion. Through compassion one becomes empty, abandons any kind of attachment.

One becomes so empty, as to receive the whole universe into one's belly (Johnston, 2004: 221).

3.3 Jainism

In Jaina epistemology there is the knowledge of the absolute known as *kevalajñāna*. The *tīrthaṅkaras* are endowed with omniscience. The three jewels of Jainism are a closely related unit. At the pragmatic level Jaina wisdom expresses itself in the practice of the great five vows. Among them *ahimsā* is termed as the supreme duty.

4. Integration of the triptych *śraddhā*, *tarka*, and *prajñā*

We have seen how the three components of acquiring insight into reality function in the three traditions, i.e. Hinduism, Buddhism and Jainism. The Indian thinkers say that these three do not, and should not be, allowed to function independently. They were very much aware that reason without faith can be easily abused. In the *Mahābhārata* (12.173.45-48) we have the example of Indra describing the cause of his rebirth as a jackal:

I used to be scholarly, a reasoner, a scorner of the Veda. I was pointlessly fond of critical inquiry and the science of argument. I used to make declarations on the basis of logic; in assemblies, speaking with reasons, I harangued the Brahmins and was rude during the Vedic recitations. I was an unbeliever, skeptical about everything, and though stupid, I thought myself wise. The status of a jackal that I have obtained is the result, Kāsyapa, of my misdeeds (Ganeri, 2008: 411).

The *Rāmāyaṇa* too cautions against free thinking people. In the following text (2.94.32-33), Rama advises his brother Bharata to keep away from the worldly thinkers:

You must not associate with those 'Worldly' (*lokāyata*) Brahmins, dear brother. Their only skill is bringing misfortune; they are fools who think themselves wise. In spite of the pre-eminent treatises on right conduct (*dharma*), these ignorant

people derive their ideas from critical inquiry, and make declarations without any point (Ganeri, 2008: 411).

Strong words, those! Śaṅkara too was emphatic that reasoning is to be undertaken in the context of faith. He distinguished what he called dry reasoning (*śuṣkatarka*) from reasoning in accordance with revelation (*śrutyanugr̥hīta tarka*); it is only the latter that can lead to an experience of Brahman (BSBh, II,1,6 cited in Halbfass, 156).

In a similar vein we have seen the detailed analysis of the products of *tarka* given by the *Brahmajālasutta* of the Buddhists. After enumerating sixty two views of this kind, all of them are rejected as they are not based on personal knowledge or experience. Indeed, *tarka* without *śraddhā* can only build castles in the air!

If *tarka* needs *śraddhā*, *śraddhā* also needs *tarka*. Otherwise knowledge will be dry intellectual knowledge and that *śraddhā* will be blind beliefs or cheap sentimentalism (Manimala, 2008: 171). Taken together they give knowledge that matures into wisdom. As we have seen in Jainism, all the three jewels together constitute the path to liberation. Even in Buddhism *prajñā*, *śīla* and *samādhi* together help towards reaching *nibbāna*. But how does one achieve this integration? I think the *advaitic* means of liberation gives an excellent model towards this goal. So let us see how these three come together and contribute towards realization of the truth.

4.1 Śravaṇa (hearing)

It has to do with the initial acquaintance with the teachings of *advaita*. The aspirant is encouraged to listen to the great sentences of the Vedānta through a competent guru. “Hearing is a mental activity leading to the conviction that the vedic texts inculcate only Brahman, the One without a second” (Narain, 2003: 270). “Śravaṇa does not mean mere hearing about the Supreme Brahman from a competent teacher or the sacred texts; but it is the study (*vicāra*) of the Upaniṣadic texts and ascertaining the central idea of these texts, i.e. Brahman’s nature of absolute identity, by means of the six semantic clues.” (Archak, 1992: 74). *Śravaṇa* is done with a spirit of investigation leading to the discovery of oneself.

4.2 *Manana* (reflection)

Manana is unceasing thinking of Brahman, one without a second, which has already been heard from the preceptor, by means of proofs which are in tune with the central teaching of Vedanta. It is not mere thinking. It consists of three points:

i. The subject of thinking, i.e. Brahman as established in the scriptural texts and heard from the preceptor.

ii. The subject agreeable to the śruti texts and decided by means of *tātparyaliṅgas* should be developed by accepted reasoning (Archak, 1992: 74-75).

In this second stage, i.e., thinking, the advaitic seeker is called upon to appreciate inwardly, by means of prolonged reflection, the philosophical principles of *advaita* and mark these the stuff of his own living faith, (Deutsch, 1973: 107). *Manana* is meant to clear the doubts regarding the knowledge gained from śruti.

4.3 *Nididhyāsana* (meditation)

It refers to the stream of ideas of the same kind as those of Brahman, but excluding the ideas regarding body, etc. which are antagonistic to the absolute Brahman (Archak, 1992: 75). This third stage is that of “constant meditation” through intense concentration on the identity of self with Reality (Deutsch, 1973: 109). This stage culminates in the experiential knowledge of Brahman. All the three steps are inter-related. Meditation (*nididhyāsana*) is the direct cause of Brahman realization. Reflection is the cause of meditation, because it is not possible to meditate on what one has been heard of without reflecting upon its meaning. Likewise, hearing is the cause of reflection because it provides verbal instructions to be reflected upon (Narain, 2003: 270).

Conclusion

We have traversed the path of becoming familiar with the triptych, i. e., *śraddhā*, *tarka* and *prajñā* in the traditions of Hinduism, Buddhism and Jainism. Though they have their distinctive roles to

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Nature, Dynamics And Praxis Of Faith, Reason And Wisdom Theological Perspectives

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Abstract: This essay discusses the nature, dynamics and praxis of reason, faith and wisdom in the context of our life, mission and our journey towards our final goal. I begin by making a brief presentation and a critique of the depiction of the relationship between reason, philosophy, faith, theology and wisdom in Pope John Paul II's *Fides et Ratio* (FR). I then critically consider the approach of Raimundo Panikkar to understand the nature, dynamics and praxis of faith; and finally verify the possibility of wisdom providing a framework for integrating faith and reason at a deeper level.

Key words: Faith, Reason, Wisdom, Ortho-poeisis, Ortho-praxis, foolish wisdom

Introduction

This essay discusses the nature, dynamics and praxis of reason, faith and wisdom in the context of our life, mission and our 'journey' towards our final goal. Since this journey is a present reality¹, somehow the final goal too becomes at once an ongoing experience (albeit, partially) as well as something that is yet to be arrived at in the full measure. I intend to begin by making a brief presentation and a critique of the depiction of the relationship between reason, philosophy, faith, theology and wisdom in Pope John Paul II's *Fides et Ratio* (FR). I then critically consider the approach of Raimundo Panikkar to understand the nature, dynamics and praxis of faith; and finally verify the possibility of wisdom providing a framework for integrating faith and reason at a deeper level.

Some initial clarifications

At the outset we must acknowledge that a clear distinction between faith, reason and wisdom may exist in the Greco-Latin-Christian tradition; but not in several others elsewhere in the world.² In fact it is acknowledged that separation of theology/faith from philosophy led to some of the main disasters of late 18th and 19th centuries in Europe.³ These continue to this day in the form of philosophies of radical scepticism and agnosticism, atheistic humanism, nihilism and consequent totalitarian ideologies and regimes, relativism and provisionalism (FR 45, 46). It is equally disastrous when theology is separated from wisdom and from life in general.

Since the point of reference of our discourse is the human being, reason as such cannot be left out of any kind of human act. But one can speak of different types of reason. The *discursive reason*: Here belong science and philosophy. Faith is the human response to the Divine revelation and theology is the articulation of what is received in revelation. Though human reason is involved in this process, it cannot be restricted to its *discursive* nature alone. There can be *intuitive*, *aesthetic* and other forms of reason involved here.

In Western thinking we can broadly identify four positions regarding the relationship between faith and reason: 1) faith dislodged from reason, (St. Paul, Tertullian, Luther, Kant, and Kierkegaard) 2) reason based on faith (Augustine, Anselm, and Barth) 3), autonomy of faith and of reason; yet their relatedness (Aquinas), and 4) harmony of faith with reason (Spinoza, Hegel, Leibnitz).⁴

The Roman Catholic position concerning the issue of the relationship between faith and reason can be summarised as: *fides non destruit sed perficit rationem* (this in fact is a paraphrasing of the formula: *gratia non destruit sed perficit naturam*). That is to say that between faith and reason there can never be a real contradiction, but only a substantial harmony.⁵ The four main stages in the development of the doctrine of harmony between faith and reason can be traced as follows: (1) origin of the doctrine (Clement of Alexandria, who actually moves away from Pauline distaste for pagan philosophy and considers it as the highest positive achievement of pagan culture); (2) defence of this doctrine against the “double truth

theory” (Aquinas); (3) defence of the harmony between faith and scientific reason (Vatican I); (4) defence of the harmony between faith and “cultural” reason (Vatican II).⁶

In more recent times, what Clement of Alexandria considered harmony between faith and philosophy is interpreted by Antonio Rosmini-Serbati and Cardinal Newman as harmony between faith and science. Catholic theologians such as Yves Congar and Marie-Dominique Chenu extended this view to speak about a possible harmony between faith and cultural reason. Just as grace does not destroy nature but only perfects it, so does it perfect culture. Hence a harmony between faith and cultural reason can be meaningfully posited.⁷ Obviously such a harmony does not exclude mutual critique, which in turn is intrinsic to a process of perfection.⁸ In this sense, faith life denotes a journey. As *Lumen Fidei* of pope Francis rightly puts it, “faith ‘sees’ to the extent that it journeys, to the extent that it chooses to enter into the horizons opened up by God’s word” (no. 9).

In this context *Gaudium et Spes* strongly affirms that the gospel “takes the spiritual qualities and endowments of every age, and with supernatural riches it causes them to blossom, as it were, from within; it fortifies, completes, and restores them in Christ.”(No 58).⁹

***Fides et Ratio* on the interrelation between reason, philosophy, wisdom, faith and theology**

The biblical wisdom literature remarkably exhibits the relationship between knowledge gained by faith and that gained by reason. A very striking feature of this literature contains not only the faith of Israelites but also the wisdom of other civilizations (cf. Sir 14: 20-27) (FR 16). Prov 16:9 sums up an ideal collaboration of human reason and faith: “The human mind plans the way, but the Lord directs the steps”. In understanding the course of history the collaboration of faith and reason is held to be of special significance in the Christian tradition. In this process, reason is denied absolute autonomy. It is faith that makes it ‘see’ the fact that God is active in the historical events (FR 16). To see history in the larger framework of God’s activity is the true knowledge that texts such as Prov 1:7;