2.1 The Domain of Religious Discourse

Every religion forms a domain of discourse. It is a not a deliberately raised domain. It comes into being, ordinarily, with someone's intuition and grows up with the identification of a particular community of human beings with a specific religious identity. Certain object or objects assume a central position in that domain and become the subject term of all the assertions of that discourse directly or indirectly. There are no clearly laid down rules that operate on the object and its relation to other objects of the domain, but the objects are not just chaotic or whimsical. There is something rule-like about it that makes its object intelligible to various degrees to the people of that community and that makes it a genuine domain of discourse. The central object of religious discourse is primarily an object of faith for the people of the community as well as for the outsiders in different senses. For the insiders it becomes an object of faith in the sense of a matter of supreme value which manifests in the responses of reverence or dedication to it. For the outsiders it is an object of faith in the sense that it is a matter of belief and not a matter of sense experience. The outsiders' understanding of a particular religious discourse is parasitic on the insiders' understanding in two ways:-

First, the outsider can understand a particular religious discourse by empathetically placing himself as an insider.

Second, he may try to understand it in the light of a different religious discourse or that of a different sort of discourse altogether such as scientific discourse. This sort of understanding is distorted but even this is based on the imagination regarding the understanding of the insiders.

This chapter is an attempt to delineate the intelligibility condition/conditions of religious discourse for the insiders.

At the very outset, it seems pertinent to make it clear at this juncture that the difference of understanding between the insider and the outsider is not an epistemic difference; it is only psychological and historical. An insider
understands the assertions about the object of his faith objectively. And that
becomes the basis of his communication with his fellow men regarding religious
matters. An outsider can also achieve the same understanding by placing
himself empathetically as an insider. The cultural relativist position that denies
such a possibility of understanding for the outsiders is not a compulsive
position. Despite one’s own cultural upbringing and conditioning, one can (and
does) understand others’ religion and even in those matters which stand (or
seem to stand) sharply against one’s own faith. One can clearly understand the
reason for this disagreement. This only shows that one can’t agree with all
matters of others’ faith but it does not prove that one can’t understand it. Such a
disagreement rather shows that there is something in others’ faith that one
understands as disagreeable. Had it been unintelligible to the outsiders, they
(outsiders) could not have found it disagreeable. Instances of conversion make
it clear that one can also prepare oneself for agreeing with those matters which,
one found to be disagreeable earlier. Thus, cultural settings can’t be taken as a
necessary reason to confine the notion of intelligibility of religious discourse to
the insiders only. The reason for making difference between the understanding
of the insider and the outsider is a matter of psychological and historical
demarcation, not an epistemic one.

For the intelligibility of religious discourse first of all, we have to
understand the function of emotion (bhāva) in religious discourse which is a vital
and fundamental background on which the religious discourse sustains.

2.2 Emotions in the Religious Discourse

A believer perceives a religious object within a particular state of mind
that gives meaning to it. This state is basically constituted by his emotional
attachment with the object of his faith. His perception is colored by emotion. He
expresses his emotion towards the object of faith in words and through his
deeds. We find that when he expresses his emotion towards the object of faith,
his perception is colored by emotion. He expresses his emotion towards the object of faith, he gives importance to it either for some worldly possession or for its own sake.
So the expression can be put into two categories: first, expressions such as ‘I
worship my lord’ because He provides me some worldly things such as wealth,
honor, prestige, power, intellect, son, protection etc. and second expressions
such as ‘I worship my lord’ because I get happiness in doing so (enjoyment of having that state of emotion).

These two types of expressions bear some level-difference about the object of his faith. This level-difference is given in the very content of the two expressions. The difference is a kind of difference that lies between intrinsic and extrinsic values. Second expression such as ‘I worship because I get happiness in doing so’ indeed represents significance or value of emotion in its purity where as in the first expression the significance of emotion has only derived significance. One worships lord only because he gets happiness in doing so. Hence he is in the state of emotion, which is valuable to him for its own sake. On the other hand the other person who worships lord for any reason other than the joy of worshipping alone does not have the same intensity and force of emotion. This intrinsic value manifests itself in the life of a person in the form of devotion, complete surrender and full dedication towards the object of faith. The problem starts by noticing the fact that the object, towards which he is devoted, is not a figment of imagination but a living reality for him, since within a religious discourse the functioning of object has to be taken as real.

The question becomes extremely complex in view of the fact that the term ‘reality’ is discourse-dependent. Although the same term may be deemed as more than one type of discourses and nothing can be said to be real independent of discourse. Therefore, if intelligibility can be ascribed to any discourse then the object, which is referred to as existing in it, cannot be dismissed as mere fiction or imagination. There are two conditions, which have to be fulfilled for the intelligibility of religious discourse:

First, a person who participates in it without inconsistency uses the rules of discourse.

Second, there is an internal criterion available within the discourse, which distinguishes fictitious object from the real one.

Therefore, the question of reality need not be regarded as an ontological hindrance to the investigation of religious discourse. Here it becomes crucial to understand emotion objectively. But here it is obligatory to take into account that the objective study does not mean behavioral kind of
study such as done by psychologists. In this investigation the perception is to be seen in a very complex relationship to emotion. A little elaboration of this point is needed.

When a person becomes angry with some other person then it is natural that he expresses it through verbal utterances and other actions. He responds harshly to the person who is the object of his anger. Such a person not only responds in this manner but given the state of mind he sees only unacceptable qualities in the other person. Some qualities of that person which may be good are overlooked; if it is not overlooked then intensity of emotion ‘anger’ will fall or may vanish. But along with this, some thing more happens which is generally ignored. The good qualities of other person, which, can be appreciated, by the angry person some other times, is overlooked by the angry person only if surrounding conditions allow him to do so.

Viewed from this way the whole scenario is changed substantively. If the surrounding is so forceful in which the good qualities of other person cannot be ignored then it would be almost impossible for a person to be angry with him or the person would find himself in a peculiar state where he is not able to gain sufficient intensity to acquire the state of emotion (anger), though he wants to do so. It only implies that emotion of anger or any other emotion requires a particular surrounding without which it would not be possible. However it is due to intensity of anger, which covers a person’s vision and does not allow the person to see good qualities of another person but it can not be ignored that it would be impossible for a person to be angry if surroundings do not play their part in this whole process and enable him to see the bad qualities of other person.

2.21 Perception and Illusory Perception in the State of Emotion

From the analysis of the last point we understand that to arouse emotion is not within any body’s control. Although to control the overtly expressions of emotion at the behavior level is possible but it is not within anybody’s control not to feel it once it has arisen. It means that when a person is under the influence of emotion, he perceives certain things in his surrounding. So there is a close relationship between emotions and perceptions. A person
within a state of emotion perceives certain objects, which cannot be perceived otherwise. One may raise an objection that what a person perceives is an erroneous perception, because emotions can be aroused by certain artificial means such as autosuggestion. And within this state of emotion whatever a person perceives, is fictitious one. But it is worth mentioning that that is secondary problem, which indeed requires a preliminary background of some unproblematic perception within the state of emotion. The question of illusory perception related to emotive state of a person can be raised only if there is a genuine relationship between emotions and perceptions.

It can be argued that there is a normal state of relationship between emotions and its associated perceptions. In the case of ordinary human beings this relationship is intelligible and if some one undergoes a state of emotion, which is not normal then the perception of the person can be labeled as abnormal. And it cannot be accepted as legitimate perception. This objection will be applicable in our discussion only if we are going to investigate some abnormal or artificial state of emotions. In this regard we are not at all investigating any special emotion, which can be labeled as abnormal. The emotions, which a religious person undergoes, are all the same as they are for any other person. He feels only those emotions that an ordinary person feels and related perceptions on which the emotion stands and survives. But the intensity of emotion may be different in the religious context.

Therefore, the question of abnormality of emotion does not arise at all. The only difference between religious and non-religious person with regard to his emotion lies in the fact that the former perceives certain things (of religious import), which the latter does not perceive. A religious person placed at the higher level of religiosity, is in a state of emotional relation to the object of faith where faith is valuable in itself. And because of this relationship he perceives the world in one way. On the other hand a non-religious person is placed at an emotional level directed to and stick to another picture of the world. If somehow he could be convinced there is another picture of life or if certain incidents forcibly change certain things in his surrounding that bring about radical transformation in his perception then he can also perceive other picture of this world.
A non-religious person usually does not want to see the other face of life where as the religious person has undergone that experience and now he is experiencing the other face of life. A religious person who perceives this world through the emotional state directed towards the object of faith does not dismiss the truth claims of non-religious person. He only asserts that there is another picture available, which ought to be seen. It is worth mentioning that here ‘ought’ is intrinsic ought for him because his emotion towards the object of faith is not for any other purpose. Religious discourse is intelligible because of the two reasons:

First, persons placed at the higher level of consciousness can understand each others’ responses and communicate with each other.

Second, apart from this internal intelligibility there are some grounds and ways, which have been employed by the person of the higher level of consciousness to make non-religious person and the person of lower level of religious consciousness intelligible his perception regarding the world and life.

In fact a person placed at the higher level of religiosity tries to make a platform for non religious person and a person of lower level of religiosity from where they would be able to perceive his level of reality. Because of such attempts a religion, which essentially gets its birth in some individual experience, becomes a social and public affairs.

2.3 The Object of Religious Discourse: An Object of Faith

As stated in the above discussion the object of religious discourse is primarily and essentially an object of faith. Hence whatever is necessary and sufficient to understand the object is the condition of its intelligibility. A religious discourse can be understood only by delineating the functions of faith in the life of believers. A philosophical investigation of the religious faith requires the delineation of the relationship between believers’ emotions and his perceptions of the object of faith, since the believer is very deeply emotionally attached to it. Before entering into that discussion a clarification is needed about the acceptance of the object of religious discourse as an object of faith.

We find that in some religions like Buddhism and Jainism faith is not the dominant aspect. To an extent these religions are opposed to the attitude of
having of faith in their sought after goal of \textit{Nirvāṇa}\textsuperscript{2} and \textit{Kaivalya}\textsuperscript{3} respectively. In these religions the object of discourse can’t be called the object of faith in ordinary sense. The above discussion, therefore, could be criticized as being partial since they seem to give an account of the object of theistic religious discourse, or even within them only those religious discourses which give importance to faith. Though this criticism is valid to some extent, yet it primarily is based on some sort of propaganda. The two above mentioned religions are known as \textit{Sramanik} traditions and contrasted with the \textit{Brāhmaṇik} tradition that trusts in the Vedas as the supreme authority in matters of socio-religious life of the community of people called the Hindus. It is preached/ maintained in these \textit{Sramanik} traditions that one can attain \textit{Nirvāṇa} or \textit{Kaivalya} with one’s own efforts and believing in any gods or other supra natural power is not required. This becomes the reason for the criticism of the general acceptance of object of religious discourse as the object of faith.

It is worth mentioning here that in different branches of Hinduism also it is claimed that in the attainment of highest goal of human life faith in any god etc. is not necessary. Many other religious preachers also claim about the scientific nature of their religion (or cult) and proclaim that faith in any supra mundane power etc. is not needed in their path. Present discussion regarding the object of religious discourse has not to contradict such claims since the use of the term ‘faith’ is not opposed to that of ‘knowledge’. When someone says that he has faith in his friend it is accepted that he \textit{knows} his friend (or more precisely – he knows that there is such a person and he is his friend) but he also intends to say that he (his friend) is trust worthy. This quality is not a matter of proof for him, although he believes it to be true. This quality has an evaluative feature as Price holds. Price’s analysis of ‘\textit{Belief in}’ which, qualifies for faith enables us to apply this phrase not only to persons but also to abstract entities such as theories and principles\textsuperscript{4}. Belief in \textit{Nirvāṇa} (the highest state of consciousness or Being) which is free from all sorts of conditioning can meaningfully be called an object of faith. \textit{Kaivalya} also could be called an object of faith. A Buddhist believes in such a state of consciousness and he not only believes in it but he also has a deep aspiration to achieve that state since it is intrinsically valuable for him. The idea of such a state of being fascinates and
involves him most. In fact his identity as a Buddhist depends on his involvement with this idea. A Buddhist, who is truly on an inner journey to attain Nirvāṇa, could march ahead despite the several obstacles in his life, because he gets a sort of deep aspiration (emotion) for his goal (nirvana). A less involved Buddhist, who is actually not on any internal journey, also has to show at least that he aspires for it and is involved in it. For a Jaina also the belief in Kaivalya is not merely a belief that such a state exists but this it involves him very deeply. The idea of Kaivalya is fascinating and involving one for a Jaina. These are the articles of faith most valuable for the believers. These are the genuine cases of ‘belief in’ which are not reducible to cases of ‘belief that’. The analysis of belief in Nirvāṇa and Kaivalya as the cases of non-reducible ‘belief in’ is not a mistaken attempt. And the presence of some other features in these religions also justifies practically the acceptance of the object of discourse of these religions as the objects of faith. Having faith in the preaching of Tathāgata, Bodhisattvas, Arhatas or that of Tirthankaras, Jinas, Ācāryas is the essential feature of the Śrāvaka religion also. This is found not only in them who have attained the highest goal but even in them also who have not attained it yet. The intention behind the preaching that no follower should blindly accept the words of Buddha is not to encourage skepticism. It is to inspire the followers to meditate on those words to discover the truth by themselves.

2.4 The Object of Faith: An Object of Emotional Involvement

The object of faith is an object of supreme importance for the believer. This importance has an indispensable emotional aspect. The believer finds himself very deeply emotionally attached to his object of faith. The object of faith is an embodiment or source of certain qualities towards which he gets emotionally inclined. This is, ordinarily, given to him in course of his cultural upbringing in a community and becomes a part of his social and personal identity. It is through the result of the emotional attachment that the object of faith eventually becomes an object of believer’s immediate internal perception or intuition. This relation manifests in different forms at different levels of faith and poses a question about the actual status of the object of faith.

In epistemology, valid knowledge claims are supposed to be free from emotional preoccupation regarding the object of knowledge. Emotional
inclination (or aversion) is regarded as the hindrance in the objective response to qualities of the object (a thing or a phenomenon) of cognition. This is true, very largely, about the objects of external (sense perceptual) cognition, especially if the object is a physical one. Despite the theory-laden character of observation, it can be acknowledged without difficulty that the emotions of the observer are not involved in his perception of a physical object. Emotional involvement of the observer with such an object of cognition (if there be any) is not taken into consideration since they are known to be not affecting the physical laws operating on them.

The same can be said, with certain qualifications, regarding the object of investigation in Social Sciences. Emotional involvement of the observer with a phenomenon (customs, laws, institutions etc.) of his own community is a social reality that has to be taken into consideration by someone who undertakes the task of investigating it properly. This does not necessarily amount to an implicit assent to cultural-relativism. It is, rather, the requirement of objectivity of investigation. If an emotional attachment of the individuals affect a social phenomenon then it would be wrong to deliberately ignore it. Since social laws operate in a community due to the individual’s emotional involvement with them, it would be wrong to ignore this force while investigating a social phenomenon. The observer (either an insider or outsider) has to know what the case is. If he comes to know that in a social phenomenon, the individual’s emotional involvement is a reality, then to acknowledge it is to obtain an objective knowledge. To come to this conclusion is not the result of the observer’s emotional involvement with the phenomenon and in this sense this is a veridical case of reception of objective knowledge. It would count as an emotional pre-occupation against the object of investigation and it leads to an incorrect conclusion. Hence emotional involvement for or against the object of investigation is to be kept aside in the realm of social reality also. But it has to be done more cautiously because emotional involvement takes a different shape in this realm.

In order to understand the nature and function of the object of faith it is necessary to take into account its emotional relation to the believer since it is an essential aspect of it. A man of faith is emotionally attached to the object of his
faith. Hence it is the requirement of objectivity to accept it as it is and to see how it affects the person. To investigate the intelligibility condition of religious discourse, therefore, proper attention should be given to the emotional attachment in which a religious person perceives the object of faith and in that light perceives world around him very differently. The object of faith becomes a very special object for the believer due to this relation. Failure to conceive it in its actual nature leads to misinterpretation of the whole domain of the discourse.

2.5 Relation between the Believer's Emotion and Perception: The Object of Faith

There is an intricate relation between the believer's emotional attachment with the object of faith and his perception about it. In order to understand the intelligibility of religious discourse it is necessary to understand this relation or varieties of this relation.

2.51 The Nature of the Object of Faith for an Ordinary Believer

A person, who has faith in a personal God, gets an image of it from his religious tradition. He does not, ordinarily, know that he has an emotional attachment with it and it functions in his life shapes most of his responses, especially his emotional and moral life. Indeed this image becomes the essential element that constitutes his identity: personal as well as social. For him this is not an image but a living reality, which is hidden from his sight, but he does not have a clear idea of what sort of reality is that. Borrowing from the tradition he uses the words like transcendent, eternal etc. but, ordinarily, he does not contemplate about the practical import of these words. For most religious believers their object of faith - the image of God, which is not an image but a living reality for them, gets connected to their lives through some of their desires. Most people worship their God for the fulfillment of some desire. If the desire is fulfilled then they attribute it (the success) to their God but if it is not fulfilled then they attribute it (the failure) to themselves finding some flaw in their modes of worships, prayers etc. It does not happen, normally, that someone ascribes his failure to his God. This also hardly ever happens that a person loses his faith in his God due to some crisis that befell him. This shows clearly about the emotional attachment that the believers have with object of their faith.
The object of faith is, in some sense, indispensable for the believers. They just can’t live without it since it gives them an emotional support to move forward in life confidently and also helps in coming out of the shocks of frustration and crisis of life. Since this attachment (of the believers with their God) is an emotional connection and not primarily rational so while they give justification for their faith by referring to the fulfillment of their wishes as the grace of their God, they don’t mind the inconsistency in overlooking the cases of non-fulfillment of their prayers. If someone points to this overt inconsistency then they either give some reply which is rationally not appealing, or avoid replying to such questions completely. They continue to believe in the reality of the object (God) of their faith, whatever inconsistency is there in the behavior of the believers. It is worth mentioning that they firmly believe in the reality of the object of their faith and don’t believe that it (the object of faith) is only a supposition to practice a particular way of life. No believer, despite accepting the inconsistency in his response, ever agrees to the view that whatever he believes is nothing but to take it as a way of life and to accept it in a psychologically appealing manner. Although an ordinary believer does not have any direct experience of his God, he does get some glimpse of some attribute of divinity in the instances of his wish fulfillment such as miraculous escape from dangers, getting help or direction in the state of utter despair and bewilderment etc. For an agnostic these cases are not proofs of the reality of the believer’s God. From an objective point of view also these can’t be regarded even as weak proofs. However, from the standpoint of the enlightened believer, (who realizes the events of emotional attachment with God for whatsoever reason) this is an occasion of direct contact with divinity for the person. He regarded it as a matter of feeling the presence of the divine. It should not be taken as merely his figment of imagination.

The ordinary believer’s emotional experience that his God fulfilled his wishes or saved him from a danger or rescued him from the state of utter despair etc. can’t be out rightly dismissed as a worthless superstition. An ordinary believer also, when overwhelmed by the presence of the divine in these situations, does feel the presence of the divine and does not have any doubt about it. The emotional state of being overwhelmed in their actual
experience is not merely a sign of relief of getting the wished result or being saved from a danger or coming out of the state of despair but the feeling is essentially mixed with a sense of gratitude for the object of his faith. These two states are very different from each other and, to an extent, separable too. Even a true agnostic feels relieved when he passes through the above stated situations and gets joy also but that relief or joy is the end of his stress. The sense of gratitude is not a part of that feeling. There is just no reason for the presence of such a feeling in the case of a true agnostic. But in such situations a believer's feeling is mixed up with the response of overcoming the stress (crisis) and gratitude towards his object of faith. The feeling of gratitude would lose its meaning altogether if the God of the believer does not become a part of his experience at that moment. It does not mean that he encounters with his God but it definitely means that he experiences one or some of the qualities through which he or anybody recognizes divinity. Divinity here is matter of experience that simply means something extra-ordinarily higher than humanly qualities and powers. The God of his faith, (which is normally a traditional image comprising such qualities and powers) becomes a matter of experience for him at this moment.

In a non-theistic religion also an ordinary believer passes through similar feelings (sense of respite mixed with gratitude as above stated). The object of faith of an ordinary believer of non-theistic religions is not a person. So he can't have the feeling of gratitude directly towards it. But he feels gratitude for his preceptors or prophets (Tathagata or Tirthankar) who are the embodiment of the supra-humanly qualities. Historicity of preceptors is not important for these believers since they revere them as historical manifestation of a-historical supra-humanly qualities even if they are actually present (historically) before their eyes. Until a follower of this religion himself reaches the highest goal of renunciation (Nirvana or Kaivalya), it is practically necessary for him to trust and to revere the preceptor at every good or bad turn of his life as a paradigm of realization of the highest goal. And trusting in him (Tathagata and Tirthankara) he finds a supra-mundane and a-historical solution of all his mundane and historical problems. Ordinary believers of Hinduism and that of Jainism or Buddhism are almost alike in respect of this emotional connection. In
order to understand the religious discourse in the context of an ordinary theistic believer, we should look at his object of faith (God) as an object whose presence he experiences in certain moments of emotional attachment with Him. In order to understand the religious discourse at the level of an ordinary believer of a non-theistic religion, we should look at the object of his faith (as supra-humanly state of one’s own being or consciousness) manifested in a person who stands as an embodiment of it and whose presence (God) he experiences in some moments of emotional attachment with Him. In both these cases, the experience is not a sensory experience and its object does not stand out there in the physical space. This experience is not sufficient in itself to enable the believer to reasonably claim the reality of the object of experience even for himself and to dispel all doubts about it. Nonetheless this is an experience and its object is an object of experience and not an object of imagination.

This is all about what we find in ordinary believers. But this is not all about this emotional connection that every believer has with his object of faith. For some believers the object of faith is an object of their emotional attachment in very specific way that makes it an object of immediate internal perception. And it becomes a ground of justification of his claims. Doubts about the reality of the object of faith become irrelevant for the special category of these believers.

2.52 The Nature of the Object of Faith for a Specific Category of Believers:

Some believers develop an attachment with God (of their image) not for seeking any worldly help but for the sake of the valuing this relation itself. Some people have the feeling of reverence for the object of faith (God) and they find this feeling valuable in itself. To be related to God – to be a man having faith in God, is of supreme importance for them and not to have faith means (in their eyes) a lack of something vital in human life. The value of emotional relation lies in the state of bliss that the believer gets from this relation. It very often manifests in the form of deep intimate personal relation with God of the believer’s image. The behavior of the believer shows it very clearly. In some cases it might not necessarily manifest in that form (deep intimate personal relation with the image of God) but even in those cases the bliss of this relation is clearly felt by the believers.
Some believers develop an intimate relation with image of the God. They enter into the relationship with the God of their image like that of a master-servant or father-son or lover-beloved etc. This relationship is very much real not only from the point of view of the believer but also from the point of view of an observer. The love of Meera or Chaitanya for their Lord Krishna is known to all and their contemporaries observed so in their behavior. They were undoubtedly in love with the Krishna (image). The reality of this aspect of faith is ordinarily overlooked in view of the fact that the object of the believer’s faith (i.e. God) is not found anywhere in the spatio-temporal world. This is very big obstacle that comes in the way of understanding the nature of the object of faith that results into misunderstanding regarding the nature of the religious discourse as such. It is true that on the basis of the believer’s emotional responses to his God, we can’t logically infer the reality of God, but to overlook this living reality of the believer’s life, can’t help in achieving a right understanding of the nature of religious discourse. Any attempt to reduce the believer’s emotional responses to insanity or day-dreaming can be regarded only as attempts to ridicule the believer and his faith. There is a definite reason (common sense) for not accepting such explanations of the believer’s emotional behaviors as pathological. It needs to be elaborated to some extent.

In the light of the Freudian theory of the unconscious, the believer’s behavior is explained as a sort of satisfaction of some suppressed desires of the unconscious mind which the believer is not aware of. This sort of explanation fails to answer certain important practical and conceptual questions. Even if the ecstasy experienced by the believer in the emotional attachment is admitted to be caused by some of his unknown suppressed desires, it remains unanswered as to how the God of the believer’s image motivates him to abandon all worldly pleasures and supplies him at times with the incredible courage to make self-sacrifice also. If an image of God, had merely been a toy of believer’s unconscious mind, it would have been only an instrument for the enjoyment of hidden sensuality. In that case it can’t be an apparatus to motivate the person to do the opposite. A believer of this special category is found to lead a life of austerity to an extent of self-negation. Sensuality is completely absent from his life. In fact the joy of his emotional relation with his God makes
every other-worldly pleasure worthless and beastly in his eyes. The explanation of the unconscious repressed desires is, therefore, not satisfactory.

However, even if this sort of explanation (of the unconscious repressed desires) is accepted to be satisfactory for most cases, there is no compulsive reason to accept that every instance of faith (in God) is necessarily a case of suppressed desire. There is no logical contradiction involved in envisaging a case of faith (in God for itself) which is not a result of suppressed desires if we don’t take only suppressed unconscious desires as the defining characteristic of faith in God for itself. Apart from a particular school of Psycho-analysis no one would define faith in God for its own sake as a defining characteristic of faith. So not defining faith in this way does not lead to any logical inconsistency. There is no good reason to accept that theory of suppressed unconscious desires is the only available theory to understand the faith in God for itself. And if we acknowledge that a person placed at the higher level of religiosity perceives the world differently, then we should make some room for the consideration of those cases where emotional involvement of some kind becomes necessary and sufficient condition to enter into an intelligible but different world of perception. It is not to resort any kind of solipsism or mysticism.

2.6 Faith as a Self-Aware State of Mind

In the above discussion faith is frequently admitted as a state of the believer’s mind in which he is emotionally involved with the object of faith. It is presented as a sort of state of emotional experience. This view is different from the commonly accepted view of faith. Ordinarily it is admitted that faith (in God) is a path of religious life and a direct experience of God is its destination. This view can be interpreted in two different ways:

In one of its possible interpretations, the path and the destination are regarded to be two different things. They are connected to each other but the destination is not in the journey; it comes only after the end of the journey. The believer has to have faith in God and has to pass through the ups and downs of life. If he succeeds in holding faith firmly till the end, then God Himself reveals to that person. Till the divine encounter he has to keep holding his faith in God with his own power of will. The sustenance of faith is regarded as a matter of
human effort and the divine revelation in the believer’s experiences is a consequence of that effort. It is not a consequence in the sense of a causal output of the effort. It is a consequence or the result of the effort in the sense an athlete gets a medal as a result of his successful effort in an athletic event. Reaching a particular point is a result of his effort in the causal sense but getting a medal as a result for his achievement is not a result in that sense. It is a reward or prize. A prize is given to someone in recognition of his effort. The prize-giving agency rewards the athlete for his accomplishment but does not help him during his effort; it remains unconcerned. A believer also, in this interpretation, has to make effort to hold his faith by his own efforts and during this course, the divine help does not come for his favor.

Another possible interpretation of the relation between the believer’s faith and his direct experience of the divine, the latter is achieved in the former. In the journey of religious life the destination of divine revelation comes in the faith itself. It is not away from the point to start. From the beginning of the journey of religious life, the destination is always available to the believer. Having faith in God is connected to the final destination of the divine revelation not only in the sense that the latter is the end point of the former, but in the sense that with the event of emergence of faith in the believer's heart, the process of divine relation has already commenced.

This interpretation is very different from the former interpretation because it is admitted here that the divine providence helps the believer in every effort of the sustenance of faith in adverse conditions. Something extremely important about the sustenance of faith is underlined in this interpretation which has been missed in the earlier interpretation. The believer can not lose his faith in God howsoever adverse conditions of life he may be in. He has no reason for doing that. But some believers don’t do that since they find themselves deeply involved with the God of their faith even in the most adverse conditions. This involvement alone stands against all the odds and does not let him lose his faith in God. Without this deep inner emotional involvement a believer can’t keep his faith alive and this is some thing that is a divine gift to him and not simply a product of his own imagination. A believer comes to this realization in depth of faith. This is a state of self awareness. The
believer, in the depth of faith, comes to know the divinity present in faith only because he is aware of his faith. To know that faith in God itself is divine - is to know faith itself. And this is the key that opens the door for further divine revelation for him. With this awareness he gets a direct glimpse of the divine in his life and comes to know for certain that only in the awareness of faith, God Reveals Himself fully in all His power and glory.

The latter interpretation of the common view of the relation between faith and God realization is obviously more appropriate and comprehensive in comparison to the prior one. It is more appropriate to admit that God reveals Himself in the inner world of faith of the believer. Without this clarity the analogy of religious life with a journey leaves us with no definite answer in this regard.

The encounter of divinity in its un-surpassing glory and astonishing powers is availed by a believer only in the self aware state of faith. Awareness of any external event never gives anyone the feeling of witnessing something that could be acknowledged as divine. Faith is a state in which the believer becomes aware of an image of supra mundane power. His faith deepens when he realizes suddenly that he has become aware of divinity through the image of God. He, then, realizes that the traditional image of God which he possesses as an object of his faith, is not something that pictures a God outside it, rather it is a means or a way through which divinity itself comes in his direct awareness. Self aware state of faith is the deeper level of faith. Divinity becomes a content of the believer’s experience only in the self aware state of faith. At this deeper level of faith the believer is not lost in the image of divinity; he becomes aware of the divinity itself. The journey of religious life for such a believer is the process of further deepening his realization of the divinity.

The above discussion helps in understanding the object of faith of a person placed at the deeper level of faith. In order to understand the religious discourse in its fullness, it is necessary to take into account this level of faith too. It is clear now that for a believer of this level, the object of his faith is not an image but it is a living object of his direct awareness. God for this level of believer is a reality (or a real supra-mundane person). The believer's assertion about his God can be taken a genuine truth claim. Such truth claims don’t pose any epistemic problem if they are grasped in the light of the above discussion.
In this regard it is important to note Aquinas’s opinion that every thing that is a matter of belief can not necessarily be approved by reason but nothing that is rational can be unbelievable. Truth claims of reason are available to the believers and non believers alike but truth claims of Faith are not all available to the non believers it implies that non believers can have access to some truths of faith. When a believer of a deeper level of faith states the attributes of his God, he talks about that supreme person whose attributes he experiences directly as the content of his self awareness at that level. He becomes aware of the supra mundane glory and beauty of faith in God. Although a direct encounter with the divine person is still away, the awareness of supra mundane bliss of deep faith itself makes the believer to assert that there is a source of it.

The above discussion helps us in understanding a believer's talk about the glory and the beauty of his God; he is indeed referring to the inner source of the bliss which he is directly aware of. Most people have not got this deeper level of faith but it does not make the believer's assertion unintelligible. We may not envisage the actual details of the believer's experience but we very well understand that the believer is not talking about any physical event but about the source of an inner experience of a joy that is not caused by any external phenomenon at all. It is also clear that the believer is referring to something which is not an inanimate object but a fully developed consciousness having the tremendous power of will. Despite its dream-like description, it is also clear that the believer is not dreaming, since he is in a state of self awareness. With the assertions of the believer, we come to know that at the deeper level of awareness, one gets the glimpse of what is called divinity. In the light of the above discussion St. Augustine’s and Kierkegaard’s statements regarding faith acquires an informative import—informative not only about any external event but also about one's own inner reality.

Religious discourse at the deeper level of faith, thus, needs to be taken as the believer’s assertions about his inwardness (or inner world) which he enters into the state of self awareness. His assertions are to be taken as genuine assertions that give information about that world. That world needs to be seen as a real world of experience despite its being attributed by the believer as ‘Divine’ or ‘Supra-mundane’ because he actually experiences that as real.
The overt behavior of the believer also gives a sort of attestation of the reality of his assertions. Although this is not a proof in the epistemic sense, but it is definitely a proof in the sense ‘proof’ is used in our common usages. Forgiveness by Jesus to his killers from the cross is definitely a proof of the assertion that God is love and not hatred or retribution. In and through the whole life of Jesus, it is proved that he had faith in a God who is love. The words of Jesus could easily be interpreted as his belief that love is the highest moral value. This could be acknowledged as the most appropriate interpretation of the assertions of Jesus only if a simpler interpretation is not possible. But a simpler meaning of his assertions is available. We can understand that he, in his inwardness, encounters divinity as an embodiment of pure love. We can understand that he, in his self-awareness, enters into that state of consciousness where he finds himself under the overwhelming care and protection of a supra-mundane power. He feels what a child feels in the presence of his loving father. It is the direct awareness of the presence of divine as to be in the presence of a powerful and loving father that gets expressed not only in his words but also gets manifested in his fearless mounting of the cross with a heart full of love even for his killers.

The life of Jesus is therefore an unmistakable attestation of what he said, and it is simple to accept and understand that he said what he actually felt. Similarly the life of Meera is definitely a proof that her beloved Lord Krishna is a real supra-mundane person to whom she feels as deeply emotionally attracted as a wife feels for her charming husband. Neither the father of Jesus is a worldly father, nor is Meera’s husband an earthly husband. So there seems to be no strong reason to deny the reality of the object of their faith with the fear of this sort of possible misunderstanding. Denying the reality of the object of their faith is a deliberate creation of a big misunderstanding. To understand the nature of religious discourse at the deeper level of faith, therefore, the informative import of the assertions of the believers must be accepted and for that the reality of the object of faith must be acknowledged. Confusion arising in these attempts could be further clarified, but the move to ignore the informative import of these assertions to preclude such confusions can’t be accepted as a correct move at all.
2.61 Faith transforms the Believer's Perception of the Mundane World

A man of deeper level of faith asserts truly about what he actually feels in his inwardness. However, his inner self-awareness does not remain confined to his inner psychic world only. He gets a new insight in his self-awareness that transforms his perception of the mundane world around him. The relations and affairs of the mundane world turn up before him in a very different shape. Old associations, attachments and complaints disappear and a new relation emerges with the world. Not only the world of human relations gets transformed but even the inanimate world does not remain indifferent. It also enters into a new relationship with him. The believer begins to see a divine purpose behind the events of the so-called inanimate world. His attitude towards the world is changed. Such overall changes in the life of the believer also indicate that in the deeper level of faith, the believer is not lost in day-dreaming, hallucination or fantasy but attains a deeper vision of reality that is spread within and around him. The attitude of the saints and the bhaktas appears to be abnormal and some people get easily tempted to call them insane or superstitious. But if we understand that this is only a temptation and actually there is no compelling reason behind it then we get an incentive to understand them through their vision.

As stated earlier, the understanding of faith of this special category of the believer is not a special understanding that is not available to common people. Although these believers talk about 'inwardness' and 'subjectivity', but they never mean thereby that only they can understand it and no one else can. Inwardness or subjectivity is a common state of human awareness. Most people, lost in the business of external world, never care to enter their inwardness but that neither disappears from their life nor becomes insignificant for them. Anyone can get motivation towards his inwardness and understand the revealed truths that manifest in the words, deeds and lives of saints, bhaktas and in the philosophies of theistic existentialists.

Although above discussion is an analysis of the deeper level of faith of the theists, the situation is not very different for the religious believer who does not believe in the personal God but believe in Nirvana or Kaiwalya.
A person having faith in Buddha and Bodhisatvas meditates on the truths stated by them. This is a journey to inwardness. At the initial level of faith in Buddha serves the same purpose as the faith in personal God does for the theistic believers. At the deeper level this faith keeps him awake inside and enables him not to be involved in any image or idea. Eventually he attains a state of content-less self-awareness but for that he has to become fully aware of all that appear before him as the contents of his mental acts. Remembering the instruction of Buddha that essentially involves his faith in Buddha enables him in accomplishing this arduous task. In this journey the follower has to become aware that remembering Buddha’s instruction. If it is content of his awareness and he has to drop it also from his awareness, this act of dropping all the ideas and images leads the follower to the glimpse of Nirvana – the state of pure silence and nothingness. But it is worth mentioning that this act involves the follower at a deeper level of faith in Buddha. The self-awareness that even Buddha’s instruction is a content of awareness manifests the follower’s faith in Buddha’s instruction. Without this deeper level of faith in Buddha, one could accidentally come to the self-awareness that every idea is content of awareness and must be dropped. But that can happen to anyone anytime. For the follower of the teachings of Buddha, it is not an accident. The self-awareness that even the Buddha’s instruction is a content of awareness (and must be dropped) is only a manifestation of the follower’s deeper level faith in Buddha. It is, therefore, clear that in a non-theistic religion like Buddhism also, faith at a deeper level essentially serves as a state of self-awareness that gives the believer the glimpses of highest end accepted in that religion.

In brief it can be said that the intelligibility of religious discourse involves our understanding of the object of religious believer at two levels. Proper understanding of both the levels of faith alone gives a comprehensive picture of the religious discourse. The initial level of faith is generally ignored in a philosophical discussion but a philosophical investigation of intelligibility of religious discourse can’t be complete without taking in to account the comprehensive understanding of the both levels of religiosity - the higher and the lower.
Nirvana (or nibbana in the Pali language) means literally 'blowing out' or quenching. However, since the term is probably pre-Buddhist, its etymology is not necessarily conclusive for determining its exact meaning as the highest goal of early Buddhism. In fact, many Buddhists have traditionally preferred to explain it as absence of the weaving (vana) activity. Here weaving is a metaphorical description of the mind's manner of operation when distorted by ignorance of the true nature of things and by craving for possessions and states of being. It is probably not accidental that such a definition does not tell us what exactly nirvana is. Buddhists have generally avoided any verbal description of their goal and have tended to doubt whether it is possible to describe it. The simile of the man injured by a poisoned arrow is commonly cited in this context: in the immediate situation he should focus upon obtaining medical treatment rather than be concerned with specific details of the arrow, poison or archer. Similarly the urgency of attaining nirvana is such that it is better not to be over concerned with details of its nature and consequences. From the origins of the word itself it is possible to assess the earlier position which is being reacted to here. Nirvana derives from the root 'to blow' and means the blowing out or quenching of a lamp flame or a fire. In one use it is the fires of passions, such as greed and hate, which are put out by the enlightened sage. In another usage, applicable to the time of death, the flame of the lamp covers all types of ordinary human activity. These cease at the death of the enlightened saint, like the flame of a lamp. In pre-Buddhist usage this would probably have been understood as meaning that the fire had returned to the latent or potential state from which it arose in the first place. Rather, the Buddhist texts tend to suggest that language is inapplicable to the case since words are in the last analysis derived from sensory experience, which is taken to include memory and imagination. Most mentions of nirvana refer to it as the goal, or as supreme happiness with many synonyms which make clear that it is conceived as the ultimate security, purity and peace. A few of the early texts, mostly preserved in Pali or Chinese translations, provide a little more information. Someone who experiences nirvana is explicitly declared to be conscious, but not conscious of 'anything which the mind has seen, heard, sensed, felt, obtained, sought or explored'. See: Anguttara Nikaya (The Book of Gradual Sayings) IV 320, 353-8. Later a clear distinction between nirvana attained in life and nirvana entered into at the point of death begins to develop. The term parinirvikalpka is often used for the latter although it does not acquire this meaning until a later date - in the earliest sources it is simply an alternative to nirvana. (Strictly, nirvana is the state of release; parinirvana is the act of attaining release.) However, relatively early sources (although not the very oldest) do contain the important simile of the ocean which shows no sign of filling or diminishing no matter how much water is poured into it by streams or rainfall. Similarly, even if many enter parinirvana by means of the element of nirvana without any remaining a 'clinging', the element of nirvana shows no sign of filling or diminishing. Here 'clinging' is a technical term referring to the appropriation or identification which occurs as a result of desire. Since ordinary human existence and mental process are understood as the result of such appropriation, there can be no continuation in the familiar conditions of existence once it has ceased. Kevala is the state of pure and infinite knowledge (anantajñana) and infinite perception (anantadarsana). In the samsāra state on account of the karma veils this purity is sullied and the veils are only worn out imperfectly and thus reveal this and that object at this and that time as ordinary knowledge (māta), testimony (śruta), supernatural cognition as in trance or hypnosis (avadhi) and direct knowledge of thoughts of others or thought reading (manparājñā). In the state of release however there is omniscience (kevala jñāna) and all things are simultaneously known to the perfect kevalin as they are. In the samsāra stage the soul always acquires new qualities and thus suffers a continual change through remaining the same in substance. But in the emancipated stage the changes that a soul suffers are all

References and Notes:


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exactly the same and thus it is that at this stage the soul appears to be the same in substance as well as in its qualities of infinite knowledge etc., the change meaning in this state only the repetition of the same qualities.

See: Surendra Nath Dasgupta, *History of Indian Philosophy*, vol 1, Motilal Banarsidas Delhi, 2004, pp 207


6 Cultural Relativists assert that concepts are socially constructed and vary cross culturally. These concepts may include what is considered true, morally correct and what constitute knowledge even reality itself. In *Understanding a Primitive Society* (American Philosophical Quarterly, 1964) Peter Winch argues that our sense of reality is a social construction based upon the prevailing discourse of a society. Thus cultural relativism rejects the rationalist and universal premises of grand theories such as functionalism. See: Oxford Dictionary of Sociology, Ed. Gordon Marshall, Oxford University Press, YMCA Library, New Delhi, pp 134-135


Freud allocated the task of fostering the sense of reality to a hypothetical neural structure, or functional part of the mind, which he called *das Ich*, or the ego. (The literal meaning of Freud’s phrase is *the I*, but the Latin pronoun used in the English translation has now acquired a life of its own.) In his final conceptualizations he linked this structure with two others, the ‘super-ego’, which judged or criticized the ego, and which included the ego-ideal, representing the ideals or standards by which the ego was judged; and the primitive ‘it’, or id, the natural matrix of basic and potentially conflicting instincts or drives - that is, structures which would yield basic emotions and motives for action - out of which these others developed. His late discussions of these notions are particularly difficult, partly because they combine differing modes of explanation. Overall the ego, super-ego and id are neural systems described in a functional way, that is, in terms of the goals which their operation secures and the information upon which they operate. This kind of explanation has been refined in contemporary cognitive science, in which distinct functional units are often represented by boxes, in a flow chart which describes the contribution of each boxed unit to psychological functioning overall. In his later work Freud sought to combine this mode of explanation with the empirical claim that the main functional systems of the human mind are partly constituted by the mind’s internalized representations of significant persons in the environment, particularly the parents. Hence the working of these systems is partly felt, and can partly be described, via the motives, feelings or actions of the imagos of persons which they embody. Freud took the drives constituting the id as divisible into two main categories: those which engender motives which are creative and constructive, such as affection, love and care, which he called the life instincts; and those which yield motives linked to aggression, such as envy and hate, which he called the destructive or death instincts. The sexual drives (or motives), together with those aimed at self-preservation, were among the life instincts generally; but owing to their great plasticity they were liable to be mixed with aggression, as in the case of sadism, masochism, devaluation of the object of love, and so on. His final view was thus that the primary conflicts in a person’s life - those which necessitated repression and could become constitutive of mental illness - might involve sexuality, but were ultimately to be seen as holding between impulses to create or destroy. On Freud’s account the ego and super-ego develop out of the id, mainly through the child’s formative identifications with others, particularly the parents. The child ordinarily begins to advance towards self-control by laying down prototypical images of the parents, in their role as regulators of socially significant primitive bodily activities, particularly, as noted, those
involved in feeding and the elimination of waste. These ‘earliest parental imagos’ (Freud 1953-74: vol. 22, 54) provide the basis of the super-ego. This self-critical faculty embodies the child’s aggression in a projected form, and so tends to be far more punitive than the actual parents. Hence it can be a source of great anxiety or guilt, or even, in the extreme, of suicide. (Compare the material in §5 above, which might also be described as involving projection of the patient’s punitive super-ego.) The child further constitutes its ego by identifying with the parents as agents, that is, as desirers and satisfiers of desire. A main step in normal development is identification with the parent of the same sex, which has the consequence that sexual (and other) desires are rendered non incestuous, heterosexual and reproductive. For this to occur, however, the child must renounce the goal of replacing the envied parent with that of becoming like him or her. Hence the final establishment of the ego and super-ego coincides with what Freud called the dissolution of the Oedipus complex.

8 Augustine, Thomas, *Summa Theologica*, I, Q.43

9 Augustine declared that ‘faith precedes reason’ because nisi credideritis, non intelligitis—unless you believe you will not understand. (St. Augustine Enchirid, V in Nicene, Post Nicene Fathers Ed. by Philip Schaff New York 1900).