Chapter 5

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As we have discussed in earlier chapters religious experience is a first hand direct experience and religious statements bear the content of the truths experienced or disclosed in that. Ordinarily the epistemology which needs to be put in the background for understanding directly apprehended truths is almost the same for religious experiences as for other sorts of directly apprehended truths. However, given the specificity of religious experience the epistemology for it needs to be grasped in a specific manner.

Religious experience is a simple human experience but it occurs to the people of a particular religious community in the background of the concepts which form their religious belief system. Without any religious belief system in the background religious experience can’t occur. A person if he or she does not have any religious belief system in his cultural upbringing, can not have any religious experience in the sense that he or she does not have the necessary framework to apprehend it. This fact is generally exploited for supporting some sort of radical cultural relativism which is further used for stripping religious experience of all its truth contents. In order to understand the epistemology of religious experience it is necessary at the first instance to realize that cultural background does not produce religious experience. The impossibility of religious experience without a religious-cultural background means only that the experience can not be attended and apprehended without a cultural conceptual framework. A person would not be able to recognize a religious experience as something worthy of attention even if it occurs to him many a times. Without a cultural conceptual framework the content of religious experience can’t be grasped by a person’s mind and left unattended. So many things occur every moment in our life every day but not all of them are attended by most of us. Thousands of stimuli pass before and around a person but he or she does not attend them all and they don’t make any meaningful content for him or her. Thus if a religious-cultural framework is not already given to a person he or she cannot have a religious experience.
With this clarification it is to be noted that this line of thinking cannot be correctly used for supporting any form of radical religious-cultural relativism.

Religious experience is a very simple human experience which is in a way pre-cultural experience. This point is grasped not because it can be conceived in some pre-cultural way of understanding but because of the fact that the person who undergoes this experience within his religious-cultural belief system recognizes it as such. It means to say that for attaining religious experience no special training is required as the experience of a particular technical segment of life requires. When a working scientist looks through his radio telescope the images of a distant galaxy he can’t understand its content unless he is specifically trained for apprehending the light spots appearing on his screen as the images of stars and spatial debris. He passes through an experience (fully meaningful content) which any untrained person can’t have. For an untrained person it is an experience of glimmering light spots on the screen only. He can’t see them as stars and other celestial bodies. Religious experience is not this sort of experience. One does not need a special training in a particular discipline to have religious experience. On the contrary, religious experience is availed by a person only when he unlearns for the time being every thing else.

There are many ways to describe the fact that religious experience is availed only when a complete deconditioning from other things is achieved by him. In some religions it is described as a process of detachment from the world\(^{40}\) and in some other cases it is described as a way to turn the mind\(^{41}\). Changing the direction of the focus of attention from all that we do in our day to day life and to fix it on that which is underneath is the way to attain religious experience. Religious-cultural upbringing of a person makes her/him susceptible to this dimension of human experience. This point could be explained later on.

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\(^{40}\) *karma evādhiкāras te mā phaleṣu kadācana mā karma-phala-hetur bhūr mā te sahgo ‘stv akarmaṇi*

*Bhagavad-Gita, Chapter 2 / 47.*

\(^{41}\) *Set your mind on God’s kingdom and his justice before everything else, and all the rest will come to you as well.*

A religious person – a person who is brought up in a religious environment of a particular community becomes sensitive (at least supposed to be so) to that which is happening beneath or behind all that is happening at the level of sense experience in our day to day life. When someone says that God is benevolent and mean thereby something which he experiences directly he does not mean that a person like we people is hidden somewhere and helping him. This kind of anthropomorphic interpretation of statements like “God is benevolent” only shows that the person has not undergone a religious experience while uttering it. In other words a person who makes this statement may mean to criticizing theism by taking this anthropomorphic interpretation. Or he may be grappling in the dark to find what it exactly means. But a person who is brought up in a religious tradition and utters this statement to refer to his experience intends to say that something is there underneath this world of sense experience that helps him (others also) when he is in distress. The person is making a truth claim implicitly but definitely because he feels it. The feeling may be vividly clear to be called a full-fledged experience or just a feeling of someone’s presence. One thing is clear about it – he is not talking about his imagination. He is primarily and essentially talking about what he experiences or feels.

It is true that at times strong imagination makes a person feel what he imagines. Hence it can be argued by the critics that the religious believers feeling or experience is generated by his own imagination. While it is basically wrong to subscribe this view about religious experience, it can be accepted for a while as true to show that in any case the believer is feeling/experiencing something even if it is produced by his imagination. Imagination and feeling are different. Even if the feeling is produced by an imagination it is a feeling and not merely imagination. Imagination of anything does not always generate feeling/experience although feeling/experience may involve some imagination. This point needs to be taken seriously. Religious truths cannot be undermined by declaring them as mere figments of the believers imagination: they are felt or experienced by the believers (some believers of a particular religious tradition may talk of
religious truths just by way of habit without having any experience about it, but some religious believers definitely talk about them because they have experience about it. In present discussion the religious truths are discussed from the point of view of the latter sort of believers. So when a religious believer states that God is benevolent, he is talking about what he actually feels or experiences and not what he imagines.

The question of imagination and its relation to simulated experience needs to be discussed in some detail. A thought experience is being presented to reflect upon it: let us suppose that there is really an object O which is of particular shape and size. A person A is asked by a person B to imagine that object of that shape and size. So long as the person A has not seen that object O through his own eyes his imagination remains an imagination only. However, let us suppose that A is also told by B that whenever he feels cold it is due to the presence of O near him. Now on feeling cold if a person says that the object O is near him and while saying this he imagines the same shape and size of O. Epistemically it cannot be said that A knows the object O while he feels cold. But his statement that such an object O is near him is not false either and have the likelihood of knowing O because he is imagining him simultaneously. Such a person, when encounters O in his sense experience at once recognizes it as O and has no doubt about it. He will not be surprised at all and will also have no question about the reality of his imagination. He would recognize that what he was imagining was real indeed.

This thought experience can be applied to some extent to understand the reality of the so called imaginative apprehension of the religious believer. A religious believer brought up in a particular religious tradition is, of course, supplied with an image of the divine (person or state). But in his real life he encounters innumerable situations in which the effect of the presence of that image is directly felt/experienced by him. If somehow he comes to know that what he imagined was actually present independent of his imagination then he would have no surprises and will come to know the reality of that image. Earlier it was an image for him but once he comes to know that it exists
independent of his mind also then he will realize that even earlier he was knowing the truth although not aware of it.

Religious believer brought up in a particular religious tradition is given a truth about how the divine operates in human life. He does not know it in the beginning. He passes through various situations in life when he experiences the effects personally although he does not know the divine personally. But even in this state what he conceives is not false but true.

In the light of the above discussion the issue comes down to the question of the experience of the divine presence as a matter of mind independent reality. This is the crux of the problem and the epistemology of religious truths depends upon it.

Entering into the above stated issue it is necessary to understand the meaning of the phrase – mind independence. It is to be noted that naïve realism can not be defended rationally in any field of higher knowledge. Highly theoretical constructs can be said to be merely instruments of explanation or if they are to be accepted realistically then they cannot be independent of the conceptual framework which makes them relevant. Obviously conceptual frameworks can’t be mind independent realities like stone etc. That naïve realism cannot be advocated for any higher scientific knowledge either.

When we enter into subtler realms of human experience like music etc. the reality of the content of the experience would become extremely problematic if we stick to naïve realism. The melody of a piece of music is present in that piece. It is not present in the mind or imagination of the listener. Different listeners, vary in sensitivity and taste, enjoy the music differently in different degrees. However, the melody of that piece of music is not a matter of subjective choice or imagination. It is there in that piece. Had it not been there one could not have felt it merely by imposing his imagination on the performance of that piece. So one cannot support naïve realism in cases of experiences like melody of music but that does not necessarily entail any subjectivism. Despite variation in the opinion about the quality of a piece of music people admit the objective (mind independent) existence of melody.
This paves the way to understand very largely that the religious believers experience also contain a definite truth (religious truth) in it. Different religious believers of the same community, despite variation in their mode of experiencing, acknowledge that what they are talking about is a mind independent reality and not a product of their subjective imagination.

In fact the question of subjectivity of religious experience is an ill-posed question. The truth or falsity of higher level scientific truths are grasped in that level of understanding only although their consequences are applied at the gross level of sense experience. The question of objectivity of melody of music is grasped and evaluated at the reflective awareness of the experience of music only. Similarly the mind independent truths of religious experience are grasped in that realm of experience only. Although that experience affects the material realm of sense experience also, these truths can’t be grasped and judged appropriately at that level. Truths of religious statements like ‘God is benevolent’ is a truth that is grasped by the believers of a particular religious community in an experience which they avail by deconditioning themselves from the material realm of their being. Science tells us how our organism functions. It gives explanation about the functioning of different systems of human anatomy and informs how various chemical compounds generate metabolic activities in human organism. Trained in science, a person gets so conditioned by the scientific explanation that he allows himself to accept any further questions beyond the scope of science as irrelevant and irrational. He has no good reason for this kind of assumption but he admits it as a matter of habit. Why these systems function the way they function or how life sustains due to the chemical reactions of various compounds in the organism are admitted as nonsense questions. These questions are admitted to be nonsense because they don’t fall within the scope of scientific explanation. The circularity which is so obvious regarding it is hardly ever noticed. Whatever is scientifically explainable is admitted to be rationally relevant and whatever is rationally relevant must be scientifically explainable. Rationality is defined here exhaustively in terms of scientific explainability. There is no good reason for accepting this view. Anything which does not fall within the scope of
scientific explanation can be called irrational only if rationality is admitted to be identical with the questions dealt within the scope of science. Obviously this is the sort of prejudice or bias. The questions why life sustains on earth in the given material conditions, why those material conditions obtain, why those conditions persistently and uniformly are present – are some of the questions which can’t be scientifically explained but are very relevant questions for anyone who has not conditioned himself to accept the relevance or rationality of a question as identical with scientific explanation. So unconditioned by scientific training one can raise these questions as meaningful and relevant questions and religious traditions give the people the framework of belief system where an objective answer is obtained by the people in their first hand direct apprehension. The persistence of the life sustaining conditions on earth, the proper functioning of different systems in the organism, survival of the organism against oddities, presence of self-consciousness in the material organism, feeling of self-hood by the individual and the growth of reason to apprehend the surrounding environment and above all the emergence of fine emotions and high sentiments in human hearts – all help the person to realize the religious truth that there is something supramundane behind or beneath them. Statement ‘God is benevolent’ is the manifestation of that simple directly apprehended truths.

God believer comes to know these truths directly as a matter of his immediate experience – the experience that is very simple (or simplest) in the sense that as a self conscious human person he realizes the relevance of the above stated questions and finds answers in perceiving on the conditions in and around him. A person understands an experiential difference between benevolence and malevolence and his perception on the conditions in and around him enables him to realize that the overall conditions generates the situation for the emergence of life, reason, fine sentiments and self awareness of all these, and makes its sustenance possible. This perception, without any doubt, enables him to make the statement that a supramundane power is operating behind all this. His cultural upbringing only helps him to give the statement the form – God is benevolent. In other words the person, who makes
the statement (God is benevolent), is only uttering what he directly feels and not interpreting anything that is not before his direct perception. Believing in God is only a way, through the religious-cultural upbringing to decondition oneself from all the mundane surroundings to reach the state of simple self awareness.

The epistemology of religious truths contained in the statements of religious beliefs is an epistemology of deconditioning and unlearning all that is acquired by a self conscious human person since his early childhood. This epistemology is of two folds. Religious belief is given to a person in his early childhood from his religious tradition towards which he sticks as some kind of positive assumptions regarding the world and his own being. Most people till their death use them like that only. However, that is not the only function of the statements of religious beliefs. The most important function comes later when these assumptions help him to decondition himself from all the mundane engagements and see the simple truth of the world and his own being directly. Not all people could rise to the level of this function of religious belief but that is the more or the most important function of it. Religious beliefs, in fact, enable the persons mind to be aware of that which is beyond or beneath the mundane prevalent eternally. Theistic religious beliefs give a person a notion of God which is beyond all sorts of mundane limitations and conditions. Any anthropomorphic understanding of God is surely a misunderstanding of it. A proper understanding is achieved by the person when he deeply meditates on the notion of God and realizes that such a person or power is not present in the world of sense experience or even the world created by imagination. Sooner or later he realizes that this makes a space within him, where, detached from his mundane engagements he could see that which operates in and around him. By providing a seemingly positive assumption religious belief eventually draws the person’s attention towards that simple plane reality which generates and sustains life, consciousness and all its marvelous beautiful modes.

Those religions which do not provide the notion of creator God also do the same function. In religions like Buddhism and Jainism there is no concept of creator God. However, what they teach is exactly what is already discussed
in the above paragraphs. Both the religions straight forwardly instruct people of their community to withdraw from the pressure and compulsions of worldly desires to realize their supramundane unearthly essence of being where neither suffering nor death reaches. Believers of Buddhism aspire for Nirvana that is a state of pure complete unconditioned state of consciousness (which is called anatta or shunyata). Jainism also teaches people to withdraw from all mundane desires to lead that austere life in which the person realizes his infinite essential being in all its grandeur (anantchatushtiya).

Epistemology of religious truth, as stated in the above discussion, is an epistemology of that sort of simple directly apprehended truths which is the very essence of human self and which he realizes in entering into his deepest core of subjectivity.

**Verifiability in shareable experience**

It is ordinarily questioned whether religious experience is verifiable or not. Since religious experience is acknowledged as a completely private experience in which no other person is involved, it is doubted that if a person is hallucinating in the pretext of religious experience then there would be no way to detect it. This kind of doubt is based on misunderstanding the nature of religious experience. Two points are to be taken into consideration in this regard – (a) The nature of any ordinary experience as such, (b) The nature of religious experience.

(a) **The nature of any ordinary experience as such** – It is to be looked into clearly whether any experience – sense experience or any other common experience is public or private. When someone looks at a yellow flower placed before his eyes he sees a yellow flower. Anyone before whose eyes a yellow flower is placed would see a yellow flower. This description creates a misgiving that if some object is placed in the external space would see the features of it as the same or very much similar. In other words it is assumed that the experience of an object in a physical publically shareable space is a common or shareable experience. This, however, is a naïve assumption. When a person A looks at a yellow flower F light rays reflecting
from the flower, falling on the retina of A’s eyes generate the visual sensation about the properties of that flower in the brain of A. This process is a neural process that takes place exclusively in the brain of A. the ensuing sensation of yellowness of the flower is a psychic/mental event which also takes place exclusively in A’s mind. If the same flower is seen by another person B then similar neural event will take place in B’s brain and similar mental event will take place in B’s mind. However, whatever happens in A’s nervous system or in his mind cannot be directly witnessed by B. The same is true of the neural events and psychic events taking place respectively in the brain and the mind of B. Neither can A nor B have any direct access to each others brains and minds. That shows that the so called common sense experience of an object placed in a publically shareable space is also completely private. In fact experience as such takes place only in a living individuals mind and there is nothing like commonly shareable experience in this sense.

Given this condition no question or doubt is raised about the verifiability of such experiences. In fact it is a matter of doxastic practice that such experiences are believed to be true or veritable unless some obstructions arise to challenge that practice. Till an obstruction arises in the course of perception of an object whose presence is unquestionably accepted people keep believing the existence and presence of that object. If once an obstruction has arisen regarding any object out there in the space the very status of sense perception as such comes under doubt. However, we do not doubt on all our sense experiences or even most of our sense experiences just because of the possibility of error. So the sense perception is not doubted not because it is tested to be indubitable but because it is a matter of general practice of believing in the veracity of this experience. So it should be clear that the acceptance of sense experience or any other experience of our day to day ordinary life is a matter of doxastic practice. Religious experience also have the similar nature to a very large extent. It also occurs in the mind of the religious person and it is also personal or private as any other experience is. Doubting about its veracity is a matter of doubting it from the level of sense experience of physical objects. Ordinarly people and mostly the critics of
theism raise doubt about the veracity of religious experience because its content cannot be found in the sense experience or other experiences about physical objects and events. This is not justifiable. Given the above analysis it is clear that the doxastic practice about the acceptance or non acceptance of the veracity of an experience is to be decided by the community of the people where this is practiced. The veracity of religious experience, therefore, is to be decided within the community of the religious persons who undergo this sort of experience. Deciding its fate by common experience is just irrational and unjustified.

**b) The nature of religious experience** – Religious experience also is a human experience. It is a human experience not in the sense of sense experience. Sense experience is available to every human individual (possessing normal sense organs) by birth. No human being has to make any special effort or needs any special training for experiencing the world which is present before there sense organs. Religious experience is not an experience of this sort. Without having a background of the upbringing in a particular belief and value system one cannot attain a religious experience but that does not mean that it is not a common human experience. Experience of beautiful and sublime also are verities of common human experience. However, to understand and appreciate a work of art or literature one has to cultivate some taste for these things and that requires some sort of direct or indirect training. Development of taste for art work or literature does not generate beauty in them. It only helps in experiencing (discovering) beauty in them that lies in them only. Similarly religious experience also is a common human experience and to some extent it is availed by many but clearly attained by a few only. A particular religious background of belief and value system in which a person is brought up, enables him to be susceptible to that dimension of his life which is ordinarily referred to in philosophical language as the inner most core of subjectivity. This upbringing does not generate this experience; it only directs the attention of the person inwardly and creates environment to realize it with full vividness. It is available to every ordinary person because no human individual can be thought of as devoid of an innermost core of subjectivity.
Most people don’t undergo this experience because the outward directed attention does not leave space for thinking and deciding to direct it inwardly. It is for this reason that religious experience becomes a rare phenomenon. Due to this a common misgiving arises that religious experience is something very extraordinary and only rarely some persons could attain it. Very largely this misgiving seems to be true because in any community of religious people only a few attain religious experience although each one of them possess the same belief and value system. Despite this fact religious experience cannot be ignored or undermined by branding it as rare and abnormal phenomenon since structurally and essentially it is available to all and it is not abnormal at all. Since it is an experience of one’s own subjectivity it cannot be called abnormal at all.

Despite the fact that religious experience is availed fully by only a few does not make it private or personal in the sense of nonshareability. One who undergoes this experience communicates with the fellow men of his religious community and that of others also. Although people do not fully understand his experience but they do not feel stunned or left in complete darkness as it happens in the case of complete failure of grasping what the other person says. People understand partly what the religious person states about his experience. They understand at least the reference range of his talk. They also understand what implications are to be drawn (and what not to be drawn) for their lives in the light of what he utters. This means that people do not completely fail to understand the religious experience attained by some persons even if they themselves have not attained it fully or properly.

Some other persons having attained religious experience understands another religious persons experience also. A religious person understands some another person’s experience also if he belongs to his own religious community, but also understands him if it is not so. Within a community of religious believers one religious person who has attained religious experience fully does understand another person’s experience also since he knows what

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the other person is talking about. Ordinarily there is agreement between two persons religious experience belonging to the same religious fold. But there could be difference between them also. Such differences usually result into the beginning of a new stream within that religious tradition or a new religion in itself. Whatever the case may be one religious person understands another religious person’s experience also, and he also understands the difference between the persons who have attained religious experience and who have not. These differences are the marks of the fact that there is a genuine content of religious experience with reference to which these differences arise, disputed, sorted out or resolved. Only because religious experience is a rare phenomenon because of the aforesaid reason, it seems that there is no possibility of shareable intelligibility regarding it. But as it is also clear that the rareness of religious experience cannot be acknowledged as a rational ground or proof for its being illusory or imaginary. Religious experience is, in principle, available to and attainable also to every human individual. As such there is no privacy or inscrutability regarding it. Obviously no test can be conducted about it in the sense of scientific tests conducted for verification of phenomena of outward world. But it is quite shareable an experience in the sense of understanding of others pains and happinesses. There is no way to experience others pain or joy but that does not make pain or joy of others as something which is merely suspicious as illusory or subjective projection.\(^\text{43}\)

\(^{43}\) If we want to understand a concept like pain we should not think of a pain as a private object referred to somehow by the public word “pain.”

In talking about pain, Wittgenstein is arguing against ‘the private language argument’. Wittgenstein pointed out that if we did indeed have private inner experiences, it would be possible to represent them in a corresponding language. On detailed examination, however, he concluded that the very notion of such a private language is utterly nonsensical.

Wittgenstein asserts that, if something is a language, it cannot be (logically) private; and if something is private, it is not (and cannot be) a language.

If any of my experiences were entirely private, then the pain that I feel would surely be among them. Yet other people commonly are said to know when I am in pain. Indeed, Wittgenstein pointed out that I would never have learned the meaning of the word “pain” without the aid of other people, none of whom have access to the supposed private sensations of pain that I feel.

One does not know of one’s own pain, one simply has a pain. While others can learn of one’s pain.

There is no systematic way to coordinate the use of words that express sensations of any kind with the actual sensations that are supposed to occur within myself and other agents. The use of language for pains or other sensations can only be associated successfully with
Other person’s pain is not directly experienced by me as it is not present in the space out there. Behavioural reactions alone are the clue to understand that the other person is in pain. The doubt that the behavioural reactions can be artificially produced is a genuine logical doubt. However, this doubt does not prove that the other person is actually producing the behaviour artificially. The doubt in this regard could be called a rationally acceptable doubt only if we have good reasons to do so. Doubt can not be accepted practically as a rational doubt just because one can logically doubt over something. What is practically accepted rational doubt and what is not – is a matter of doxastic practice. Experiences regarding one’s internal parts of the body or about the description of one’s own mental states also need to be seen in this light. They cannot be
dispositions to behave in certain ways. Pain is whatever makes someone (including me) writhe and groan.

If one feel pain there is pain, what pain is, one can’t know and pain is not just behavior, there is something triggering this behavior. The behavior is learned and the trigger is not. We might not be able to find something or an object that we could find somewhere in the body that is called pain that we could put our finger on it.

When he says, “It is not something, but not a nothing either!” (P.I. 304, p. 102e) what he is trying to say is in a literal sense of nothing and the physical thing of something that can be pointed to. This ‘not’ something and ‘not’ nothing is what pain is when we say when you feel pain and there is nothing but behavior that we could put our finger on or make an account for. But relying on mere pain-behavior does not solve the problem of describing pain and speaking about pain, nor does the grammatical language-game help in solving the problem as it has its own pitfalls.

The connection between pain behavior and the grammar are difficult to break apart. The use of language, i.e. grammar, is “in the case of pain” tied to “pain-behavior”. Pain though private in a sense but it is publicly intelligible also. Because once you describe and share it with others, it no longer remains a private experience. Others have felt similar pain and sympathize with you and can help you if need be.

To the average normal healthy human being or animal pain is real and can be distinctly felt, whether it is internally (psychologically) or physically is irrelevant. They all feel pain and it could be at different levels and of varying degrees. This pain we can talk about, remember, and we do experience it in everyday life.

Wittgenstein rejected the idea that when I am in pain I know that I am in pain because he thought of knowledge as involving the possession of a true description of a state of affairs. Since “I am in pain” is not, when I am in pain, a true description in the normal sense, “I know that I am in pain” cannot be in order if “know” is being used in the normal sense. Wittgenstein’s rejection of the possibility of knowing that one is in pain rests on the ‘special’ sort of description ‘I am in pain’ is. ‘I am in pain’ may look like a description of a mental state although the words may actually be more like a cry of complaint.

Wittgenstein supposedly regards ‘I am in pain’ as such a special sort of description that it is not a true description at all in the normal sense.

It is incoherent to talk of knowing that one is in some particular mental state.

Wittgenstein is abandoning the idea that certain utterances could be descriptions of one’s mind since Wittgenstein abandons the idea that such utterances must be descriptions of one’s mental processes.
doubted only because it is logically possible to doubt over them. Statements about these matters form a big chunk of human life and experience. They add very special significance to human life and give it its fullness. They cannot be doubted for the sake of doubt only. Religious experience also is open to logical doubt but that could not be the reason to look at it as a matter of doubt only. Human life in its present form will lose much of its value, which it has gathered in course of its development through religious traditions, if it is treated this way. Religious experience is an intelligible human experience and questions regarding its genuineness or fakery can be decided in view of the doxastic practice in this regard. Religious experience of people are not doubted, or at least it is not regarded as merely a matter of doubt. There is a shareability in religious experience somewhat similar to the shareability of pain and pleasure. I cannot have others pain. In this sense I cannot share others pain. But I very much understand what it is like that the other person is experiencing. In that sense others pain is a shareable experience. Religious experience also is like this. Religious person undergoes an experience of the deepest core of his subjectivity and another person (even if he also undergoes religious experience) cannot experience what another person is experiencing. However, he can understand what it is like that he is experiencing.

Looked at religious experience from the point of view of above explanation all baseless doubts and misgivings about the so called privacy and abnormality of it gets dissolved.

**Religious experience is pre-rational**

Religious experience is an experience of the deep core of the subjectivity which is obviously pre-rational. It is pre-rational in the sense that reason has not started functioning at this level. Reason functions when a question arises. Any question arises only when a ground of acceptance of certain common elements or features is prepared. Only on that ground a question stands. The deepest core of one’s subjectivity is that inner most level of being and experience on which alone all further questions and queries arise.
Therefore this is obviously a level of being and experience which is pre-rational. Some clarification in this regard is needed.

Having an experience in the ordinary sense requires some application of reason. To identify a situation as ‘what it is’ needs the application of reason. Thus in a common experience the role of reason as the judging faculty (what it is) required. But a bare feeling of pure presence of self is felt or known by the presence of the content itself. It does not need a judging function (what it is) since there is nothing to be judged as this or that. Phenomenologists like Edmund Husserl would deny the possibility of such an experience since consciousness always has an intentionality in it and without that consciousness cannot be meaningfully talked of. This objection needs to be addressed at this juncture.

The innermost core of subjectivity has no content in itself except for the feeling of its own presence. Thus the religious experience has to transcend essentially this barrier of mental consciousness. It, therefore, has to be strictly pre-rational. In fact this very deepest core of subjectivity, which is the very root of one’s being, becomes religious experience only when it becomes conscious (or self conscious). A religion manifests at one’s psychic level by presupposing this pre-rational experience of self and then spreads overtly towards others. The history of all religious traditions is to be traced in the root of this religious experience of self. Variations in different religions begins at first at the psychic level of the person who receives the experience at the mental level according to its conditions. Then, at the second level, as it manifests towards others also external cultural conditions also bring about various modifications. In this way the religious experience which is essentially the same, manifests variously in various forms. Since there is no rational way to establish this essential sameness of religious experience (because it is pre-rational) there always remains a doubt about it at the rational and mental level. There is no way to dissolve this doubt at all. However, religious people are not worried about this doubt because they, at the pre-rational level directly experience it.