

INTUITION IN CLASSICAL INDIAN THOUGHT

Abstract

One of the most fundamental problems of philosophy is the discrimination of the basic methods of enquiry into the nature of the ultimate reality. All the methods adopted so far may be brought under two main headings--- Intellectual and Intuitional. While for the advocates of the former method thought or intellect is the highest court of appeal, the intuitionist hold that discursive intellect gives only a superficial view of the reality. The method of intuition rests on the assumption that man has a natural capacity for acquiring knowledge, provided that he exercises this capacity properly. However the term intuition has been used many different senses. Common to all of them is the meaning that it is knowledge which is immediate and indubitably certain. Modern philosophers have taken intuition to mean immediate apprehension by the mind without intervention of any reasoning process, a particular act of such apprehension. Intuition is the whole view of things but intellect is partial knowledge. Radhakrishnan accepts intuition as a source of knowledge. He holds that there is knowledge which is different from conceptual knowledge, a knowledge by which we see things as they are, as unique individuals and not as a member of a class or units in a crowd. It is non- sensuous, immediate knowledge.

Keywords: Intuition, Ultimate reality, Intellect, Reality, Knowledge.

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The concept of intellect and intuition finds place of great importance in the Indian philosophical thought. The problems concerning reason and intuition engage the attention of even the seers of the upanisads. The upanisadic seers seem to have a very close understanding and appreciation of the nature of intellect and intuition. They seem to be conscious of the limitations of intellect and of its finitude, Reason, according to them, cannot comprehend the real or the absolute.

The aim of intellect is to find out the unity which comprehends both the subject and the object. Such a unity is the working model of logic and life. But the disappointment is the inherent incapacity of intellect to grasp the whole. Intellect with its symbols is not enough to grasp the ultimate reality." Ultimate reality cannot be made into an objective representation which the intellect can grasp.

We cannot attain to spiritual wisdom if we do not abstain from wrong doing. The Svetasvatara Upanisad tells us that impurities should be cleansed properly as mirror can reflect if it is cleansed. For that everyone should renounce their selfish desires and free from egoism. The Upanisads uses a term 'Sakshat aparoksat' to express truly the nature of the absolute knowledge. This is not an ordinary pratyaksa or perception, because there is no duality of the knower and the known in Sakshat aparoksa. Its immediacy surpasses all mediacy of the senses. We can say that here the soul perceives the soul without anything to intervene between the two. But the duality ceases to be here. To say truly, the term 'knowing' should not be used to the knowledge of the self, because all knowledge depend on this self-luminous light of consciousness, and act only through it. As Brahman is only chit or the pure consciousness, so nothing can be known except in and through Brahman. Yajnavalakya points out that the final source of all light or illuminations is the Atman.

The word 'intuition' has different senses in different systems of Indian Philosophy. The validity of intuitional knowledge has also been upheld by some school. Jaina holds that ordinary perceptions produced through sense organs are perception only for particular purpose due to their lack of clarity per excellence. Only those uncommon perceptions called avadhi, manahpariyaya and Kevala which are produced without the help of external sense organs (indriya jnana) are perceptions proper, due to their supreme clarity. Avadhi is the direct knowledge by clairvoyance. Manahpariyaya is a direct knowledge of the thoughts of others, as in telepathic knowledge of others mind. Kevala or perfect knowledge comprehends all substances and their modifications. It is omniscience unlimited by space, time or object. To the perfect consciousness the whole reality is obvious. This knowledge, which is independent of the senses, which can only be felt and not described, is possible only for purified souls. According to Jaina, compared to absolute truth all truth is relative. The distinction between subject and object disappears when we reach the absolute knowledge.. But is there any way of comprehending the nature of this absolute ? We cannot get an idea of the positive full-orbed reality by putting together our partial If we follow the spirit of Jaina logic, thought is bound up with the relative and cannot give us a knowledge of the absolute According to Jaina theory the highest kind of knowledge which combines all the characters manifested in experience is that possessed by the Kevalin or the liberated. It is full or perfect knowledge.

It was Patanjali who set forth the philosophical view of intuition as a supra-formal insight, although the source of this is ancient. According to Patanjali, this supra-normal

insight comes about only when one has mastered the moral, physical and mental disciplines set forth in the yoga sutra. According to Patahjali, a yogin develops yoga proper, that is the stilling of the mind, to a high state called samyama, intuition arises. It arises by a stages. Actually what transpires is that consciousness is shining ever more brightly into an unconscious material world. It is as if the true self were a light or torch which when obscured could illumine the entire universe and via that light, one could see into all aspects of reality. It is clear that from the above point, intuition is a supra-normal insight by which one gains knowledge of reality. Vyasa quotes: "By the scriptures, by inference and by the eager desire for practice in contemplation, in three ways he furthers his insight and gains the highest yoga."

Yoga holds by continuous practice of concentration it is possible to master everything. When by leading a pure life of meditation and concentration, the rajas and tamas are kept in abeyance the defect of obscuration (avarana dosa) is removed, and due to the preponderance of sattva, mind attains a pellucid clarity and becomes like light. The yogin then gains undisturbed calm (adhyatma prasada), and when he is in the state he obtains as insight (prajna) which is always true. A man endowed with that insight does not even a trace of misconception (viparyaya) and the insight does not operate according to the usual processes of sense perception. The yoga school says that this insight is different from the insight generated by scriptural and inferential knowledge.

The Nyaya and the vaishesika schools also accept pratyaksa or intuition is the most important source of knowledge. Vatsayana says, "When a man seeks the knowledge of a certain thing, if he is told of it by trustworthy person and has the verbal cognition of the thing, there is still a desire in his mind to ratify his information by means of inference through particular indicative features; and even after he has been able to get at the inferential knowledge of the thing, he is still desirous of actually seeing the thing with his eyes; but when he has once perceived the thing directly his desire are at rest and he does not seek for any other kind of knowledge."

The Naiyayikas have accepted this yoga or pratibha as a pratyasatti or contact. As this is not known ordinarily, it is accepted as an extraordinary contact by which the entire objective world may be comprehended in a single moment. "Arsajnana, or the intuitive knowledge possessed by the sages through the force of meditation, is sometimes called pratibha, though the latter term is more often applied to flashes of intuitive genius which ordinary an at times display."

Actually the process of having pratibhajana in the form of self knowledge is given in the Nyayasutra and Vatsayana bhasya. It has been depicted that liberation or apavarga has to be attained through the absolute cessation of suffering which is again removed through the removal of birth. This removal of birth comes into being through the abstention from the work which is again possible after the attainment of the right cognition of the categories. Hence it is said by Gautama Duhkhajhana - pravrtti - dosamithyajhana - namuttarottarapa ye tadantara payadapavargah. That is the intuitive cognition of the self leads an individual to the attainment of another type of supreme intuitive cognition called apavarga or nihsreyasa.

The same theory is accepted by Sridhara in his Nyayakandali. To him, the right cognition of the categories removes the defect of the object through which they become the objects of attachment. Through the right cognition of the same an individual can have an idea

of the true nature of the objects, which leads him to the path of detachment towards the same. If there is detachment towards external objects, a man can realise the true nature of self. After this he develops a habit of renouncing actions contradictory to the prescription of the sruti, smriti etc. This habit conjoins him with the matured self knowledge (Paripakvatam ajnana), which may also be described as pratibhajhana.

Prasastapada an author of Vaisesika school has given a vivid description of pratibhajhana in his 'Padarthadharmasamgraha'. To him an individual can transcendently perceive with the aid of merit arising from Yogic practice the internal space (antaratma), directions (dik), time (kala), atom (paramanu), mind (manah) and the quality, action, universal, particular inhered in them, and in the inherence itself. One can have the direct apprehension of the essential nature of these (svarupadarsanam) as they really are (avitatham). Moreover those who are transcendently cojoined with their souls can have immediate apprehension of the objects having subtle character (suksma) hindered (vyavahita), existing in distant place.

Prasastapada has accepted such intuition (pratibha) as of two types — transcendental (rasa) and mundane (laukika). The former belong to that type of intuitive cognition which arises from the contact of mind and self and the particular merits generated through this. This type of intuitive cognition remains in the seers who have direct vision of an object existing in past, future and present and of an object capable of not being known through ordinary sense organs. Due to this reason the whole vedic mantras are revealed to them. Sometimes in the mundane world such revelation is possible as a small girl generally says ---- "my heart; i.e. intuition says that tomorrow my brother will come." When it coincides with the fact, it is called intuited cognition in the mundane level (laukika).

Jayanta Bhatta in his Nyayamahjari raised a question : what is the proof for the existence of a Yogic perception ? To him the proof of such Yogic perception lies on the fact of the excellence in the understanding capacity of various beings (darsaanatisaya eva pramanam). Jayanta Bhatta is of the opinion that the proof for the existence of the yogic perception is nothing but the excellence in the vision of the yogins. From our day to day experience it is known to us that the ordinary people require sufficient light to perceive an object that is in proximity to our eyes but cats can see in the dense darkness. From this it is proved that there is a variation in degree of the visions. This variations of the degree in vision depends on the excellence of the same which is called atisaya.

The gradual purification of mind through yoga is beautifully described by Jayanta Bhatta with the metaphor of Gold. Just as gold gradually shines more due to the purification of it through heat, the minds of the Yogins can have immediate apprehension of all knowables through the practice of Yoga.

According to Samkara Anubhava is the form of intuition differs from idealised fancy or imagination of unreal objection. It is the real experience of Brahman through identity. The Anubhava in the form of direct experience of intuition is the highest truth. For Sarhkara intuition or Aparoksanubhuti may be defined as Brahman-consciousness. The Upanisad says that to know Brahman is to become Brahman. It is a state of deep communication of Atman and Brahman. Aparoksa nubhuti is devoid of any conceptual element when there arises Brahman-consciousness, world consciousness disappears. Brahman consciousness does not

suffer any contradiction. Since the subject object dualism is transcended. In this transcendental consciousness, it is wrong to describe it as consciousness of Brahman. It is Brahman consciousness, the fundamental of all existence. In this pure consciousness all duality is lost.

According to Sankara 'Vastutantram' is the criterion of all knowledge but the means of knowledge are varied. The various means of knowledge are powerful and valid in their own respective fields. One knowledge which does not contradict another means of knowledge, for it only tells us about those things that cannot be known by any other means. The metaphysics can attain its content only on the right use of the means of knowledge. Samkara makes clear distinction between reason and intuition as two different faculties having different scopes and functions. The one dealing with the relative and conditioned and the other with the absolute and unconditioned. Reason therefore, is incompetent to pronounce any judgment upon the affirmations of intuition (anubhava). For Samkara anubhava is super logical. Reason by its very nature realizes its incompetency to grasp reality. Samkara maintains that neither sense knowledge nor the thought constructions or reason can enable us to grasp reality as there are constant changes and denials in the reports of the senses and reality refuses to be in such changes. Reason is not the final arbiter of truth, is a super logical way of apprehending truth by intuition (anubhava).

Samkara's intuition is not something mysterious but self luminous and with its emergence all duality and darkness disappears. Self or reality shines resplendent in its own light. A direct insight into reality is possible only through perception, whether it is external or internal. Samkara however excludes sensuous perception (pratyaksa) from knowledge of the absolute reality- Brahman or Atman. Sensuous perception is according to Sarhkara useless and irrelevant for a reality which is beyond spatio-temporal determinations. Sarhkara holds that Brahman although it is of the nature of an already existent reality, cannot be the object of perception and the other means of knowledge. Sense organs, the basis of all perception, cannot grasp the reality, because by their very nature reveal the external things and not Brahman or ultimate reality. Anubhava is the pramana which alone can enable us to have direct access to Brahman or the Absolute reality.

The anubhava of Sarhkara resembles Spinoza's scientia intuitiva which is over and above the knowledge of imaginatio (imagination) and reason (ratio). Intuitive knowledge is the knowledge of the existence of the individual things in so far as they reside in God. It is the perception of God in all things and all things in God. To the man possessing intuitive knowledge all things appear in a new perspective. They are perfectly transformed. Intuitive knowledge is knowing God as God knows himself. The anubhava is the divine eye (Divya Chakshu). It is the consciousness that sees the whole variety of being as residing in the one and as emanating from that one. The man becomes Brahman when such an anubhava takes place. Sarhkara speaks of such an anubhava as sivatmabhava identification with all. Anubhava consists according to Sarhkara, in a complete and adequate apprehension of reality. The man who knows reality by such an intuition (anubhava) becomes reality (Brahmavida Brahmaiva Bhavati). Thus Brahman is nothing but an integral experience.

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