

THE ROLE OF INTELLECT IN RELIGION

Muhammad Izharul-Haq

Department of Arabic, Islamic Studies and Research, Gomal University, Dera Ismail Khan (NWFP) Pakistan

ABSTRACT

Intellect, which is the source of thoughts, knowledge and scientific discoveries, had remained under criticism, especially in the field of religion, by some schools of thoughts in Islam or even before Islam in Hinduism and Christianity. But if we look at the Quranic teachings, Islam does not believe just in blind faith. Rather it gives to everyone the right of learning, understanding and then accepting the words of God. Islam actually not only support 'reason' but it also praises 'reason' and give it primary role in scientific discoveries or even in understanding basic beliefs. For instance the Existing and Unity of God, the need and role of the prophets, happening of the Day of Judgement and resurrection. The Quran places these beliefs before the reason to assess them in the scale of argument and after satisfaction accept them. This paper will focus on the meaning and definition of 'Reason, its importance and role in the basic beliefs and then conclusion.

MEANINGS AND CONCEPT

'Reason' means the power of comprehending, inferring or thinking esp. in orderly rational way; proper exercise of mind (Webster, 1963).

The other word used in this sense is 'intellect' which means 'the power of knowing as distinguished from the power to feel and to will (Ibid).

In Arabic the word used for intellect is called 'Aql, which literally means 'the act of withholding, or restraining. 'Aqal al-ba'aīr' would mean 'he tied the camel with rope.' *Iqala*, in the past tense, would mean 'he understood (Lane, 1984).

According to Ibn Manzoor Afriqi, literally 'aql would mean 'to restrain and forbid, and that is opposite to *humq* (stupidity). Its plural is 'uqūl and 'aqala ya'qilu 'aqlan would mean, he understood (Ibn Manzoor, 1405 AH).

In modern scholarship defining the word 'Reason,' Fichte says:

"The world is a rational unified system directed towards a purpose and therefore is not a mere machine controlled by definite causes. Reason is a real entity or power which performs purposeful acts, and which includes self-consciousness as well as knowledge of the Universe as a unified whole; Reason interprets the world by a dialectical method, a logical system for

comprehending the universe as a rational unit" (Sahakian, 1968).

According to Hegal, "Reason is spirit, when its certainty of being all reality has been raised to the level of truth, and reason is consciously aware of itself. Spirit is the self of actual consciousness..." (Hegal, 1931).

He further replaces externality with the spiritual, saying:

"We must know God is spirit and in truth, He is the absolute and actual spirit"

DEFINITION

The scholars in broader sense have defined intellect. Imam Raghīb Isfahani's definition encloses their essence. He writes:

"Intellect applies to the power that receives knowledge. It also applies to beneficial knowledge acquired by intellect. According to the first definition, the Prophet (pbuh) has said: Allah has not created anything more precious to Him than intellect. As for the second definition, the Prophet hinted to it saying, "None has earned anything better than reason. It either guides him towards the straight path or prevents him from the destruction (Isfahani)."

Thanwi describes that "intellect means inborn spirit (mind) in human being through that he knows, differentiates, and seeks benefit without harm (Al-Munjid)."