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PHILOSOPHY OF DR. S.RADHAKRISHNAN: A CRITIQUE

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Abstract:

Dr. Sarvapalli Radhakrishnan was born on 5 September, 1888 in Tirutani, a well-known religious center in the Madras State. He was the second son of Veera Samayya, a tehsildar in a zamindari. It was a middle-class, respectable Hindu Brahmin family. Indeed, the place, the time and the family were most suitable, from every point of view, for the advent of a new philosopher-statesman, so directly needed in those turbulent days of the awakening of a very ancient and glorious nation, drowsy and dormant in its own ignorance and indolence, for reasons well known to all.

As usual in those days, Radhakrishnan was married in 1906, at the tender age of 18 and while still a student, to Sivakamamma, and spent a happy conjugal life with her for half a century before she died in 1956.

Dr.S.Radhakrishnan was an idealist social philosopher. His aim was to bring the ancient Indian philosophical ideas into Indian social and political realm. He believed in practicing philosophy in our life. He considers Indian philosophy as valuable as western philosophy. But the English speaking world do not have sufficient understanding of Indian systems due to the lack of knowledge in vernacular language. This paper tries to explore the philosophical perception of Dr.S. Radhakrishnan in an elucidative manner.

Bright and brilliant, with a scholarly disposition and a serene and saintly demeanor, from the very beginning, Radhakrishnan spent the first eight years of his life happily and fruitfully in his home town with his parents. The peaceful and exhilarating atmosphere of that well-known and well-loved place, as well as the benign influence of his parents who, as was common in the South, were intensely religious in the traditional sense, went far in moulding his character and sowing a lively seed of religiousness and moralism in him.

KEYWORDS:

Dr. Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan, Social Philosopher, An Academic, Philosopher, And Statesman
Philosophy, Religion And Culture, Epistemological, Indian Culture.

INTRODUCTION

Dr. Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan is best known as the man who introduced the thinking of western idealist philosophers into Indian thought. He was an Oxford don who became the first Vice President and the second President of India. He was born at Tiruttani, 64 km to the northeast of Madras in South India. His mother tongue was Telugu. His early years were spent in Tiruttani, Tiruvallur and Tirupati. His primary education was in Gowdie School, Tiruvallur. He graduated with a Master's Degree in Arts from Madras University. In 1921, he was appointed to the most important philosophy chair in India, King George V Chair of Mental and Moral Science in the University of Calcutta. Radhakrishnan represented the University of

Calcutta at the Congress of the Universities of the British Empire in June 1926 and the International Congress of Philosophy at Harvard University in September 1926. In 1929, Radhakrishnan was invited to take the post vacated by Principal J. Estlin Carpenter in Manchester College, Oxford. This gave him the opportunity to lecture to the students of the University of Oxford on Comparative Religion. He was knighted in 1931 and was known as Sir Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan. He worked as the Vice-Chancellor of Andhra University from 1931 to 1936. In 1936,



Radhakrishnan was named the Spalding Professor of Eastern Religions and Ethics at the University of Oxford and elected a Fellow of All Souls College, a post which he held until he was named the first Vice President of India in 1952. He showed how western philosophers, despite all claims to objectivity, were biased by theological influences from their wider culture. In one of his major works he also showed that Indian philosophy, once translated into standard academic jargon, is worthy of being called philosophy by western standards. His main contribution to Indian thought, therefore, is that he placed it "on the map", thereby earning Indian philosophy a respect that it had not had before. After 1946, his philosophical career was cut short when his country needed him as ambassador to UNESCO and later to Moscow. He was later to become the first Vice-President and finally the President (1962-1967) of India. When he became the President of India in 1962, some of his students and friends requested him to allow them to celebrate his birthday, September 5. He replied, "Instead of celebrating my birthday, it would be my proud privilege if September 5 is observed as Teacher's Day." Since then, Teacher's Day has been celebrated in India. He was awarded the Bharat Ratna in 1954. The University of Oxford instituted the Radhakrishnan Chevening Scholarships and the Radhakrishnan Memorial Award in his memory. He also received the Peace Prize of the German Book Trade in 1961.

LIFE AND WORKS

Dr. Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan was one of the greatest Philosopher cum-orator of Contemporary India. He was born in 1888 in south India. Dr. Radhakrishnan achieved global appreciation for his writings on Religion and Philosophy. His outstanding fluency and esteemed memory for quotations, references and recognition of persons was unusual. He was the first Indian to hold a chair at Oxford. George Allen and Unwin of London published almost all works of him and spread them throughout English speaking world. Radhakrishnan wrote more than 30 books about Philosophy, Religion, and Culture. The Ethics of the Vedanta and Its Metaphysical Presuppositions was his first work. Some of his very well recognized books are; Indian Philosophy I, to VII Volumes, The Hindu View of Life, An Idealist View of Life, Eastern Religion and Western Thought, Gautama the Buddha, Dhammapada, Bhagavad Gita, The Principles of Upanishads, Recovery of Faith, Creative Life, The Brahma Sutra Philosophy of spiritual life, true Knowledge, Indian Religion, Towards New World, The Philosophy of Rabindra Nadha Tagore, My Search for Truth etc. Let us analyse the philosophical reflections of Dr. S.Radhakrishnan's philosophy as per follows.

EPISTEMOLOGY:

For Radhakrishnan, the epistemological content of his philosophy is based on traditional Indian knowledge theory especially from advaita. He upholds the view of idealistic as well as practical Vedanta.

He considered perception inference i.e. sense experience and discursive reasoning as important source of knowledge. For him Knowledge is unveiled rather than acquired. The wrong knowledge is due to avidya or illusion. Ignorance is the root cause of avidya. It concealed knowledge. When right knowledge arise the avidya will vanishes. For him, Knowledge is the fuse between Knower and knowing object, because knowledge exists in Knower as well as in the object. If there is duality between knower and knowing object the absolute knowledge is not possible, and if a knowing object having independent existence also knower have independent existence then reconciliation is impossible. So he argues that the knower is real the knowledge is the part and parcel of the knower. The difference between the knower and knowing object is only in name and form, the inner essence are same.

In the philosophy of Radhakrishnan we can find three ways of knowing. Sense experience, discursive reasoning are the base of all knowledge. But it is not sufficient for absolute knowledge. Here he introduces intuition as the third forms of knowledge which is not coming from any medium. We acquire the knowledge of the object through sense experience. Through five sense organs and five motor organs we understand the characteristics of the objects in the external world. It is the lowest means of knowledge also the basis of all other kinds of knowledge. Through sense impression we know the name and form of the objects. But there are chances for error in this type of knowledge because the sense organs may deceive us. For rectifying the error in sense perception we use the second means of knowledge, which is intellectual knowledge. It is the indirect symbolic knowledge acquiring through mind. It is also termed as the representative cognition. It depends up on the data of sense organs. It associate and analyzes sense data and draws conceptual knowledge out of them. Discursive reasoning and the logical knowledge are special significance of the human being. Logical knowledge is obtained by the processes of analysis and synthesis. Like perceptual error there is chance for error in intellectual knowledge also, because every knowledge come from reason may contradicted through subsequent counter reason. Both sense experience and intellectual knowledge are imperfect in knowing absolute reality, because the knowledge; from sense impression and rationality are related by space and time. Such type of knowledge may always relative, apart from this intellectual knowledge concerned with multiplicity and duality, but absolute reality is beyond spacio-temporal and this multiplicity. After all, the absolute is spiritual in nature whereas sense organs and intellect are material entities. Reason is higher than sense experience and is found only in human beings. It collects facts, generalizes, reasons out from cause to effect, from effect to cause, from premises to conclusions, from propositions to proofs. It concludes, decides and comes to final judgment. It leads us safely to the door of higher knowledge.

For Radhakrishnan, human intuition is not a mere sensuous intuition but it is also original or intellectual intuition. It is the challenge of the Kantian doctrine of unknowability of the thing-in-itself. Radhakrishnan recognizes three categories of cognitive experience: sense experience, discursive reasoning, and intuitive apprehension. For Radhakrishnan all of these forms of experience contribute, in varying degrees, to a knowledge of the real (Brahman), and as such have their basis in intuition. Inspiration, revelation, insight, intuition, ecstasy, divine sight and the supreme blissful state are the seven planes of knowledge. There are four sources of knowledge: instinct, reason, intuition, and direct knowledge of Brahman (God) or Brahma-Jnana (knowledge of God). Radhakrishnan argues against what he sees as the prevalent (Western) appeal to reduce the intuitive to the logical. While logic deals with facts already known, intuition goes further than logic to reveal previously hidden connections between facts. "The art of discovery is confused with the logic of proof and an artificial simplification of the deeper movements of thought results. We forget that we invent by intuition though we prove by logic."¹⁰ Intuition not only clarifies the relations between facts and seemingly inharmonious systems, but lends itself to the discovery of new knowledge which then becomes an appropriate subject of philosophical inquiry and logical analysis.

The epistemological problem that related to intellect and intuition is far long controversy in philosophy. Radhakrishnan offers three explanations to account for the tendency to overlook the presence of intuition in discursive reasoning. He claims, intuition presupposes a rational knowledge of facts. The intuitive element is often obscured in discursive reasoning because facts known prior to the intuition are retained, though they are synthesized, and perhaps reinterpreted, in light of the intuitive insight.

METAPHYSICAL TEACHINGS:

Broadly speaking, Radhakrishnan never gave more important to metaphysical enquiries in his philosophy. His stream was mainly ethical and social. Even though, he accepted all the metaphysical concept of traditional Advaita philosophy, by adding slight differences for making his own philosophy. He made certain clarification and rectification in traditional Advaita of Adi Sankara because, until this sequence the concept of 'Māyā'; was considered as mere illusion or Nihilism but, Radhakrishnan brought

new approach towards this concept. For him, 'Maya' was not a mere illusion, but an impermanent existence. Along with this the world also not a fantasy; it is real as far as consciousness exist among us. He argues that the word 'Maya' only denoting the changing nature of the world. The fundamental principles of Radhakrishnan's philosophy are spirit, intuition and religion. World is not necessary for the Absolute. It is accidental as well as real and also it has a beginning and it has an end in Radhakrishnan's philosophy. World is the creative aspect and God is considered as creator. World must have a destiny like individual. When it reaches in to that destiny then it will disappear. The duty of individual is that to work for that destiny as well as his liberation. Here he introduces the concept of sarvamukti. He also suggest that it is not good that after getting own liberation, to wait for others liberation without doing anything. As much as we wait without doing anything for the liberation of others, it leads to be late for sarvamukti. After attaining sarvamukti only the world will disappear,

Radhakrishnan says that, the Self is the happiness itself. And it is happiness that everybody seeks in the world. There is none who would welcome grief. Happiness lies in what we like and grief in what we dislike. Every jivā is in search of happiness and so long as he does not possess it, his wandering do not cease. This infinite happiness is the ultimate goal of the Jiva. It is this which variously called liberation, salvation, the highest consummation or the supreme beatitude. He who posses it fulfils the object of his life. There remains neither any duty left for him, nor anything more to gain. He says that this liberation is attainable to all. It is wrong to say that liberation possible only to those who have renounced the world and entered the order of recluses samnyāsa, and not to the householders. He argues that for a reference to the Vedās, the Smṛiti-texts, the Epics and the Purānās will show that liberation is open to all Varnās grades of societies, and āsramās stages of life. Social order, stage of life or pedigree has nothing to do with liberation; it is one's noble virtues, exemplary conduct, devotion to God and spiritual enlightenment that make one eligible for liberation. And this is corroborated not only by the scriptures but by common sense as well. Through this argument he brings the concept of sarvamukti in his philosophy. It is the concept that the liberation of each and every being in the world.

ETHICS AND MORAL TEACHINGS:

Radhakrishnan gives more concern to values and morality than logic and metaphysics in his philosophy. His value perspective was rooted in Vedic philosophy. The moral philosophy of him was reflected through his educational political and social philosophy. Throughout his life span he was a seeker of truth and values. His vision was very wide in manner, he perceive the world as a form of global oneness. This universal oneness can be visible in all of his writings Radhakrishnan was a great humanist and ethical teacher by deed. His concept of global oneness of humanity, and give more importance fraternity than nationality is greatly admirable. He pointed out that, patriotism as well as regionalism is a threat to global oneness. While keeping the multi-religious, multi-lingual and multi-racial diversity we can keep a notion on oneness in our mind. This attitude will lead us to help others also; it is the primary stage of our perfection. The global integration can be possible only through the philosophy of oneness. We must possess a secular approach. The toleration among religion will bring secularism. According to him, different religion is different explanation of same reality. It has only mundane differences, in the inner sense every religion preaching the same truth. Our antiquity advocate the sanatana vaidika dharma which is beyond all discrimination it visualize only oneness of humanity; Tad Ekam.

By writing MA thesis, 'The Ethics of Vedanta and its Metaphysical Presuppositions' he began to fight against the criticism levelled by the west regarding ethical aspect of Indian philosophy. In Radhakrishnan's point of view world is the place to do ethics and morality. The world is not 'māyā' its existence is related to the Absolute. The duty of every individual in the world is that to observe the ethical duties without attachment. The main purpose of human are attain perfection, and they have to foresee the supreme values which is essential for building a compassionate society. He adds humans are rational as well as ethical beings and morality is the part of rationality, the quest for equality lies only in humans because they are moral beings. And the answer for why they are moral is that they are essentially spiritual beings. The future of man is exists in his hand. Our aim should be to attain highest moral status. Our action should not be mechanical. Scientific and material exploration should bring more akin with our moral responsibility. The mere scientific achievement only makes comfortless in our life; it is not enough for our complete achievement of perfection. So be aware of our duty we are not mere material entities, rather than that we are spiritual beings. Morality and helping mentality to other are essential for civilized society; mere advancement of science and technology cannot reveal the real nature of man.

The goal of human existence, Radhakrishnan asserts, is not a flight from this world for a mere personal salvation. Hinduism has falsely accused of teaching this. Human beings find themselves ignorance in the rounds of karma and rebirth. But karma is not a mechanical principle; it is an ethical one. It

should not be understood fatalistically as has often being the popular understanding in India. Although faction from the past life has conditioned the present life, humanity can overcome the conditioning through choosing a good life. There is no mercy or grace to be sought only human responsibility, the goal of our life is to work for sarvamukthi i.e. liberation for all.

While giving commentary on Bhagavad Gita, from the ethical point of view Radhakrishnan adds that The Gita starts with a basic presupposition that man is gifted with two different faculties, viz. sense and reason. It is reputed that though mostly man is moved towards sensuous gratification because of his outer nature of sense and instinct, there is also in him the occurrence of a deeper sense of shrewdness by means of which he becomes aware of ethical discrimination and thus progresses in the path of sreyā instead of preya. The value framework of a man is only ethical and here it should be noted that the ethical consideration is regulated in terms of reason rather than emotion .Progress in moral life may be difficult, but for that it does not mean that as impossible. In the moral sense alone the Gita saying that the doer of good never comes to grief becomes intelligible thus it may be concluded that the ethical teaching in Radhakrishnan's philosophy is humanistic and spiritual never supra-humanistic.

GENERAL ESTIMATE:

The quaint-essence of Radhakrishnan's philosophy is none other than the Bhagavat Gitā, Brahmasūtra and Upanishads (Prstana-trayas). But his methodology was entirely different. He gave more emphasize on logical explanation of all his experience, which acquire through the religious texts. His philosophy was highly influenced by the great western philosophers; Hegel, Plato, Bradley, White head, and Bergson. Radhakrishnan Philosophy lies in between the Advaita of Sankaracharya and Visishtadvaita of Ramanuja. His attempt was to create a Philosophy of 'universal oneness', out of all existing systems in both East and West. He gave more important in to practical philosophy than speculative philosophy. He search for novelty while preserving own tradition. His Philosophy is mystic in nature than argumentative.

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